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THE MONTH IN MUSIC

The recordings, concerts, broadcasts and websites exciting us this Christmas

ON DISC Bach boxed

There are plenty of festive CD goodies this year – you can find out more in our pick of the best (p60). But we were particularly excited this month to hear that John Eliot Gardiner's 28-volume Bach Cantata pilgrimage, featuring the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists, has just been released as a handsome limited edition box-set. See p14

ON STAGE Stag night

Forget the turkey. Venison is firmly on the menu when lutenist Elizabeth Kenny brings her Theatre of the Ayre ensemble to Southampton's Turner Sims hall on 11 December. Alongside festive works, they'll be performing Charpentier's *Actéon*, which tells of the mythical hunter who was turned into a stag and killed by his own hounds. *See p99*

ONLINE Praise hymn

Church music enthusiasts are in for a treat as the *Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* is launched. Billed as an update to John Julian's *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, the last official full edition of which appeared in 1907, this impressive online encyclopaedia has over 4,000 entries, from composers to poets and all matters hymnic. www.hymnology.co.uk









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Bells ring out at Christmas, but also throughout classical music, as Roderick Swanston discovers

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THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Jaffé

Academic and music critic



'Discovering how Tchaikovsky came to compose his most enchanting ballet has been both fascinating and amusing.

My admiration of Nutcracker has increased, as it has for the man who first inspired him to create it.' Page 24

Roderick Swanston

Music journalist and lecturer



'I love the sound of bells. They mark stages of life and of the day, and I wanted to look at how composers from Byrd to Pärt, by way

of Liszt and Oldfield, have used them in their music directly, suggestively and even symbolically.' Page 40

John Riley

Academic and writer



ARD JONES/ARTIST PARTNERS THIS PAGE: JOHN MILLAR, JOHAN PERSSON/ROH, RISKO

'It's impossible to consider film music without the composer John Williams, and this was a great chance to write not just

about his well-known "blockbusters" and infectious earworms, but his more avant-garde pieces too.' Page 48

CHRISTMAS REVIEWS

The important new recordings, DVDs and books reviewed



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See Plostribe! fantastic offer Welcome



Most of us don't get much of a choice when it comes to ordering live music to wake us up on Christmas morning (although I'm sure Petroc Trelawny has a fine selection ready for you on Radio 3...). But if money were no object, whom would you choose to

serenade you from your slumbers (and your choices can include those no longer with us)? Given my predilection for waking up to the *Today* programme each day, it would have to be something chippy and irascible – a Beethoven piano sonata, perhaps, or even better, a bit of irreverent Poulenc in the form of the Sextet for piano, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn. I'd like to see the incredible (and highly amusing) French pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet take the helm, guiding his late, great fellow Frenchman Marcel Moyse on the flute... Perhaps it might be wise to temper our Gallic duo with the refined

Send in your own 'dream team' suggestions and we'll print the best

gentility (but incisive playing) of the sorely missed Jack Brymer on the clarinet and the brilliant, richly toned horn playing of Dennis Brain. And it would only be polite to return to the land of the living for the oboe and bassoon parts: step forward the superb Nicholas Daniel and Karen Geoghegan. On p44, we ask a handful of today's great musicians to name their own fantasy ensemble, but we'd love to hear about yours, too. Send in your own 'dream team' to music@classical-music.com and we'll print the most imaginative and inspiring in next month's issue.

It does seem rather odd that most of us would be hard pushed to name the composer of one of Christmas's bestloved carols: Once in Royal, as sung by a rather nervous young chorister to an audience of millions on Christmas Eve. Henry J Gauntlett wrote the tune 'Irby' in 1849 and, aside from a couple of Anglican hymns, he seems to have since fallen into obscurity. But no more! Turn to p36, and you can learn about other similarly neglected/ignored composers who have considerably enriched the festive season over the past couple of hundred years.

In the meantime, however, I'd like to wish you all a very happy and, above all, terrifically musical Christmas.

Oliver Condy Editor

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wagner

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 - An exploration of the leitmotifs with scores, extracts and descriptions covering 65 of the most prominent themes
 - An illustrated comic strip style guide to the story of the Ring
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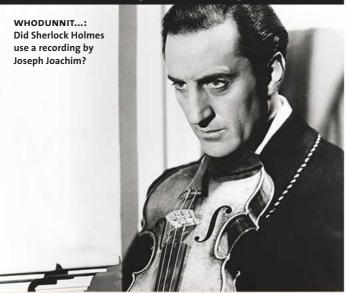
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LETTERS

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LETTER OF THE MONTH



FIDDLING THE EVIDENCE

In *The 20 Greatest Violinists* feature (November), you describe Joseph Joachim and Pablo de Sarasate as 'two virtuosos you won't hear on record'. In fact, Joachim recorded five discs for G&T in 1903, and Sarasate nine discs the following year. As you note, Sherlock Holmes expressed his admiration for Sarasate in *The Red-Headed League*, but there was also a Joachim connection. *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone* was one of Holmes's last London cases – c1903-04, shortly before his retirement to the Sussex Downs. In this adventure Holmes steps into his bedroom to practise the violin, leaving the villain and his henchman alone in the parlour for a few moments. But it's



Every month the editor will award a SolarDAB 2 Roberts radio (retail value £80 – see www.robertsradio.co.uk) to the writer of the best letter received. The editor reserves the right to shorten letters for publication.

actually a violin record that Holmes plays on his new gramophone, allowing him to sneak back into the parlour to overhear the villains' plans. Judging by the date of the story, it could only have been one of Joachim's new discs, as Joachim was the first violinist to record music for unaccompanied violin – and surely the villains would have been suspicious if they thought there was a pianist in Holmes's bedroom.

John Fowler, Illinois, US

DARKE ARTS

I am pleased to read from December's 'Next Month' page that you will be 'shedding some light on the likes of Harold Darke' this issue. I was a pupil of his from 1955-56 and 1958-59 and I have been listening again to his LPs of the 1960s, especially the Organ Sonata by Elgar. It is a wonderful performance as he had the ability, rare in so many organists, of making the organ a musical, flexible instrument. Now that the St Michael's, Cornhill organ has been altered, it is also a happy reminder of it as it was in his day. It is important that Darke's way of playing should always be available for students to study – several of these recordings are on YouTube, thankfully. I also have a recording of his performance of the Elgar from the Royal Festival Hall on his 80th birthday: amazing. Alan White, via email THE EDITOR REPLIES: To see the feature in question and read a little more about Darke's achievements, see p40

FROM THE TOP

Thanks for the 'Presidential Suites' box in your Music for a President feature (December). One musical White House that you missed was that of Richard M Nixon, Nixon, like Truman an 'enthusiastic' pianist, attended the opening concert of the National Symphony's new musical director, Mstislav Rostropovich, at the Kennedy Center. Backstage, Rostropovich politely inquired of the President what classical works he most enjoyed. Nixon responded, 'Probably my favourite is Richard Rodgers's Victory at

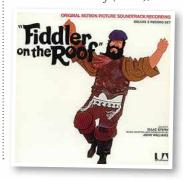
Sea.' The look of bewilderment on the maestro's face must have been worth the price of admission. *Robert M Johnstone, Indiana, US*

MISSING ELEGY

In your article on music commemorating President Kennedy you missed out one important work, namely the very moving *Elegy for a Young American* by Ronald Lo Presti (1964). It can be found on YouTube. I am puzzled why the music of this fine, though sadly rather short-lived, US composer is so neglected. *Jeffrey Davis*, *Rotherfield*

JEWISH EXPLANATION

Why is the violin the Jewish instrument par excellence (Letters, December)? In his 1983 BBC Two series The Levin Interviews, Bernard Levin put this question to Isaac Stern, who offered 'A partial answer. They are a Mediterranean people, to whom song and dance is natural. The violin is the nearest equivalent to the human voice. And because other areas were closed to them - in education, in business – they found that being a respected performer was a passport away from the ghetto. And a violin you could carry!' Fittingly, Stern plays the solos on the soundtrack of Fiddler on the Roof (below),



LAMY

a story coloured by traditional songs and dances and centring on emancipation from the cultural and economic ghetto of Anatevka. Rodney Greenberg, via email

TWO'S COMPANY

Your interview with pianist Menahem Pressler (November) fascinated me. While he speaks of 'music that changed me', a performance of his touched me as one of the most memorable I have witnessed in 60 years of concertgoing. Last winter I attended a performance of Schubert's Winterreise, featuring tenor Christoph Prégardien and Pressler. My ears focused on Prégardien, but my eyes were captivated by Pressler. I have never witnessed such a close collaboration between soloist and accompanist. Pressler clearly knew this work intimately he mouthed the words silently with appropriate expressions on his face, all the while using the piano to add a deeper dimension to the expression of the sung text. Norbert Kidd, Detroit, US

BUSY BEES

As you report, violist Jennifer Stumm wonders on Twitter 'why are people impressed with Flight of the Bumblebee? A beautiful C major scale is harder.' I've long noticed that concert audiences tend to respond most enthusiastically to performers who pull off what appear to be physically daunting feats. My inexpert opinion is this has something to do with sports. As sports fans, we are conditioned to cheer on superhuman displays of physicality and velocity more than we do subtler manifestations of brilliance. But music is not sports. Some violinist with a sense of humour ought to parody our love of pyrotechnics in the concert hall by performing Rimsky-Korsakov's lollipop at one-tenth of the standard tempo and calling his or her version The (Delayed For Six Hours Because Of Inclement Weather) Flight of the Bumblebee. David English, Massachusetts US

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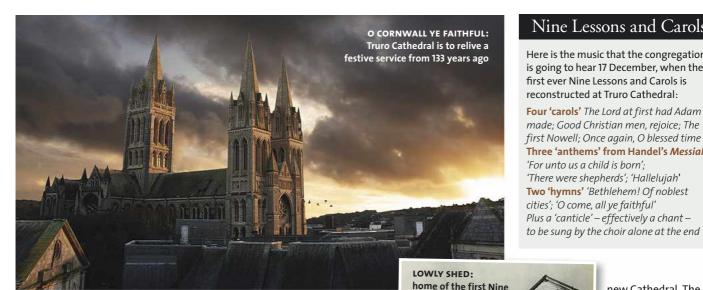


TheFullScore

OUR PICK OF THE MONTH'S NEWS, VIEWS AND INTERVIEWS

Christmas music returns to its roots

Original Nine Lessons and Carols service to enjoy revival where it all started – at Truro Cathedral



Nine Lessons and Carols

Here is the music that the congregation is going to hear 17 December, when the first ever Nine Lessons and Carols is reconstructed at Truro Cathedral:

Four 'carols' The Lord at first had Adam made; Good Christian men, rejoice; The first Nowell; Once again, O blessed time Three 'anthems' from Handel's Messiah 'For unto us a child is born'; 'There were shepherds'; 'Hallelujah' Two 'hymns' 'Bethlehem! Of noblest cities'; 'O come, all ye faithful'

Plus a 'canticle' - effectively a chant -

illions listen in on the radio to the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from King's College, Cambridge every year on Christmas Eve. But how many who enjoy this tradition are aware that it originated not beneath a glorious fan-vaulted ceiling in Cambridge, but in a temporary shack, 300 miles away in Cornwall?

This Christmas, Truro Cathedral will be giving a timely reminder of the roots of the Nine Lessons and Carols, as it stages a reconstruction of the very first occasion that such a service took place. As closely as possible, the lessons and carols on 17 December 2013 will replicate those that were heard on Christmas Eve, 1880, when a congregation of more than 400 filed into the freezing wooden building that served as the city's cathedral while the building we know today was under construction.

'I think we've got very close indeed to the original service,' says Truro Cathedral's director of music, Christopher Gray. 'We went to the Cornwall Record Office, where the Cathedral's records are kept. The file there contains the 1880 order of service with Bishop EW Benson's own annotations, and

also two copies of Hymns New and Old that are stamped with "Truro Cathedral" - I think that's as close as you can get as sources for the carols.'

Benson, the driving force behind the Nine Lessons format, was by all accounts an inspiring figure. As the first ever Bishop of Truro, he had the unenviable task of winning over a local populace miffed at the pulling down of both their beloved parish church and, in some cases, their houses to make way for the

new Cathedral. The new Nine Lessons and Carols service was dreamed up with that aim, as was his taking of the Cathedral choir round Truro to sing in people's own homes.

As for replicating the exact sounds that Benson might have heard in 1880. Grav says

there are limits to how far he's prepared to go. The Cathedral's mighty Willis organ will be reined in a little, but his choir will be pretty much left as it is.

'The local press of the time did have little reviews of services,' he says, 'and from them you build up a picture of a culture in which the singing was not always that distinguished! If our choir has made strides forward in the last 125 years, there's no point trying to sing worse for the sake of sounding authentic.'

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE



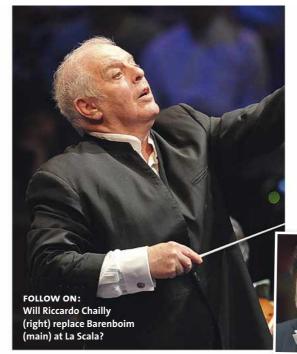
Lessons and Carols

Barenboim releases La Scala baton

Conductor opts for an early exit from Milan opera house

Daniel Barenboim has announced that he will be not seeing out his time as musical director of La Scala. The Argentine-Israeli conductor's contract at the iconic Milan opera house officially ends on 1 January 2017, but he has revealed that he will be bringing the curtain down on his activities there two years early. Barenboim, 71, will not be retiring from the spotlight altogether, however, as he will be continuing with Berlin State Opera, Staatskapelle Berlin and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra as well as establishing an academy for young Israeli and Palestinian musicians.

The decision to move on brings to a close a relationship with La Scala that began in 2006 when Barenboim was named as 'Maestro Scaligero' (principal conductor), a position that changed to musical director in 2011. Though times at the opera house have been tough – with staff strikes almost as regular a part of the calendar as Verdi and Puccini -Barenboim has also enjoyed his triumphs



Milan Maestros

La Scala's top dogs **Franco Faccio** (1871-89) **Arturo Toscanini** (1898-1908; 1921-29) **Tullio Serafin** (1909-14; 1917-18) Victor de Sabata (1930-53) Carlo Maria Giulini (1953-56) **Guido Cantelli** (1956) Gianandrea Gavazzeni (1956-68) **Claudio Abbado** (1968-86) Riccardo Muti (1986-2005) Daniel Barenboim (2006-)

there, and Stéphane Lissner, La Scala's superintendent, says that the conductor's departure will be 'the end of an era'.

But who will be next in the hot seat? At the time of writing, the smart money is on Italian Riccardo Chailly, currently conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus

> Orchestra. Not only has he enjoyed a long association with La Scala, having previously been assistant conductor to Claudio Abbado there, but he is also believed to have the backing of the staff.

RISING STAR Great artists of tomorrow

has been my most

important moment'

Louis Schwizgebel pianist

Swiss pianist Louis Schwizgebel first caught the classical music world's attention with a blistering performance of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto at the 2012 Leeds International Piano Competition. Although he came second

behind Federico Colli, The Guardian's Tim Ashley wrote: 'In an ideal world [Colli and Schwizgebel] would have been placed joint first... Schwizgebel offered a

performance that was exceptional for its poetry and insight, and which stood comparisons with some of the great interpretations of the piece.'

A year on, Schwizgebel, 26, still basks in the competition's warm glow: 'I'm still feeling the effects of that. I have many opportunities now; it opened many doors for me. In the past I'd also won the Geneva Competition, but it was the Leeds Competition which has been the most important moment in my career recently.'

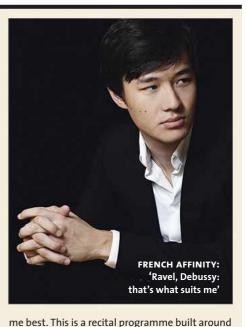
Among the opportunities that presented themselves was the chance to join Radio 3's New Generation Artists Scheme, whose alumni include fellow pianists Paul Lewis, Khatia Buniatishvili and Benjamin Grosvenor. 'The New Generation Artists scheme is a great opportunity to play concertos with the BBC orchestras and to play in venues like Wigmore Hall,' he reflects. 'Basically it allows me to meet many people in

the classical music world 'The Leeds competition and to make connections.'

Unlike many New Generation Artists, Schwizgebel already has two recordings under his belt - a

disc of chamber music by Brahms (with cellist Ophélie Gaillard and clarinettist Fabio Di Càsola) and a recital disc, issued in September this year on the Aparté label. The latter recording, called Poems, brings together Ravel's Gaspard de la Nuit, Liszt's La vallé d'Obermann, Holliger's Elis and works by Schubert.

Schwizgebel explains the thinking behind the programme: 'I feel particularly drawn to French music - Ravel, Debussy: that's what I think suits



Ravel's Gaspard. The idea is that all the pieces are inspired by poems and you can listen from the beginning to the end without stopping. It's really a programme for the listener.' Interview by Elizabeth Davis

BBC Music Recording news

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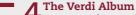


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Shostakovich Symphony No. 4

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6 Dvorák Violin Concerto
Anne-Sophie Mutter (violin); Berlin Philharmonic/Manfred Honeck DG 479 1060 Oddly, this is the first time the German violinist has recorded this work - better late than never...





The Queen of Heaven

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers Coro COR16118

The Queen of Heaven features music from The Sixteen's 2013 choral pilgrimage around the UK





8 Mozart Clarinet Concerto
Martin Fröst (clarinet); Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, etc BIS BIS1893

Breathtaking playing from the superlative Swede





A Tale of Two Cellos

9 A Tale of Two Genos
Julian and Jiaxin Lloyd Webber Naxos 8.573251

Husband-and-wife cello team, Julian and Jiaxin collaborate on music from Monteverdi to Pärt





Dvorák Cello Concertos

10 Steven Isserlis (cello); Mahler Chamber Orchestra/Daniel Harding Hyperion CDA 67917

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The Beauty Stone

Sullivan's The Beauty Stone has been given its first complete professional recording by Chandos. The 1898

'original romantic drama' was something of a flop at its premiere, closing after a run of just 50 performances at the Savoy Theatre. Despite the opera's flaws, the theatre's director described it as one of Sullivan's 'most charming scores'. Set in Flanders, it explores the story of the ugly Laine (sung by soprano Elin Manahan Thomas, pictured above) who makes a Faustian pact with the devil to make herself beautiful. The cast also includes tenor Toby Spence as Philip, the Lord of Mirlemont, and baritone Alan Opie as the Devil. We'll be reviewing it next issue.

Pure Allegri

The Tallis Scholars have released their first Pure Audio Bluray disc. The centerpiece of the disc is Allegri's Miserere, the work that helped put the British choir on the map with their first recording of it in 1980. Here, the performance is that recorded in the chapel of Merton College, Oxford in 2005, and released on CD two years later. Peter Phillips made use of the space by placing the solo quartet at the opposite end of the chapel from the main choir, and it's this spatial arrangement that can be shown off by the high resolution surround and stereo sound of the Blu-ray format. The set also includes a CD version.

Pilgrim's Progress



It was in 2000 that John Eliot Gardiner, his Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists embarked on the ambitious Bach Cantata Pilgrimage performing all of Bach's church cantatas in one year. Now all of the recordings made during that landmark year have been released as a limited edition

box-set. As well as the 28 volumes already available on Gardiner's own label Soli Deo Gloria, the set includes four CDs that were previously released on Deutsche Grammophon. There's also a disc including an index of the cantatas, the sung texts with English translations and original sleeve notes in English and German.



REWIND Artists talk about their past recordings...



THIS MONTH ALISON BALSOM

One of Britain's finest trumpeters, Alison Balsom this year celebrates a decade of recording. Over that time, she's recorded old and new works from Albinoni to Zimmermann. Warner Classics is marking the occasion with a compilation album The Sound of Alison Balsom.



MY FINEST MOMENT

Sound the Trumpet

Alison Balsom (trumpet); The English Concert/ Trevor Pinnock EMI 440 3292 I find it really difficult to

definitely most proud of Sound the Trumpet because I enjoyed the whole process so much, particularly working with Trevor Pinnock and the English Concert. Trevor is an extraordinary live artist, but he's also got great skill in the recording studio because he's able to keep that amazing presence and spontaneity that you get with the adrenalin of a live performance, even over extended session times. He would use a quiet and gentle voice if the music was quiet and gentle and, vice versa, was able to inject energy into pieces with his direction in between takes when it was required. As a result, when I listen to it, it may not be the most perfect recording, but it's the most live-sounding, and therefore alive,

one and that is incredibly important to me.

I usually co-edit them myself. That said, I'm



Italian Concertos - concertos by Albinoni, Vivaldi, Cimarosa, Marcello and Tartini

Alison Balsom (trumpet); Scottish Ensemble EMI 456 0942

This recording was quite an unknown quantity when we started, but I knew that it would be quite a big mountain to climb to play so many concertos on the piccolo trumpet in quite a



short timeframe - we only had a couple of days. The only way to do that without pacing myself too carefully and worrying about my lips was to throw myself at it completely. So that's what I did! With each

concerto, I found that I couldn't wait until the next page and I also really hated stopping. I had my head really buried into each piece. That is what every musician is after more than anything - when you are so immersed in the music that you can't think of anything else. We certainly had that for this recording.

I'D LIKE ANOTHER GO AT...

Haydn and Hummel Trumpet Concertos Alison Balsom (trumpet); Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen EMI 216 2130

I had a great time making this disc, and I got so much from working with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, who in my opinion are one of the best ensembles. However, what I've got to say about the Haydn Trumpet Concerto changes as I get older - not just as a result of getting more experience as a player but also from changing as a person. Technically it's very simple, but it's profoundly beautiful and masterfully written, and one's interpretation naturally and organically changes. In fact, neither the Haydn nor the Hummel concertos are particularly complicated when you compare them to music from later periods, and yet they are extraordinarily transparent, delicate and revealing – your style and taste in phrasing and so on is so vital to keeping everything alive. You can also hear so much about an individual's own playing and musicality within the opening exposition of either concerto. It's not a case,



STUDIOSECRETS

We reveal who's recording what, and where



AFRICAN QUEEN: Pumeza Matshikiza

Renaud Capuçon has been in Aix en Provence recording JS Bach and Pēteris Vasks for his latest disc on Erato. The French violinist, who joins the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, has brought together Bach's Violin Concertos BWV 1041 and 1042 and Vasks's Distant Lights of 1977.

Cello Concertos by Shostakovich (his First) and Prokofiev (Op. 58) have been on Steven Isserlis's music stand for his new disc. He has been recording for Hyperion with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra and conductor Paavo Järvi in the Frankfurt Radio Hall.

Pumeza Matshikiza has been recording her debut album for Decca Classics in Abbey Road Studios. The South African soprano has chosen a programme which brings together traditional African songs with opera arias by Mozart and Puccini, as well as a new work by Paul Mealor.

Stephen Costello and Ailyn Pérez – tenor, soprano, husband and wife – have been sharing the love with their new album: At First Sight - Love Duets, recorded with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and conductor Patrick Summers for Warner Classics. It includes music by Mascagni, Verdi, Puccini and Massenet.

The Kindertotenlieder and Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen are at the heart of mezzo Bernarda Fink's new Mahler disc with pianist Anthony Spiri, the Ensemble Gustav Mahler and the Niederösterreichisches Tonkünstlerorchester, with Andrés Orozco-Estrada. It was recorded in Austria for Harmonia Mundi.

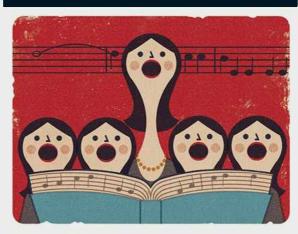
#38 DESCANT

THE MORE OF these columns I write, the more I'm coming to treasure Michael and Joyce Kennedy's Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music. It was there that I found these sanity-restoring words: 'Descant. Like "Faburden" a puzzling term because at different times used with different significances.' After struggling through several dictionary articles on Descant/Discant, most of which seemed unable to agree on the etymology of the word, let alone what it meant, I felt like kissing my battered Companion. Confusion is in fact the only honest response. Does the 'cantus' in the Latin 'discantus' signify a voice, or is it an adjective meaning 'sounding apart', or does it come from the Anglo-French 'descaunt', meaning - well, what?

Strikingly, several major dictionaries deal only with the medieval 'discant', ignoring the modern 'descant', as though unworthy of attention. The earliest use of discant, or terms like it, stems from the medieval age, when traditional single-line chant was increasingly embellished by improvised countermelodies.

DISCOVERING MUSIC

Stephen Johnson gets to grips with classical music's technical terms



From this grew the more disciplined notion of counterpoint, made easier by the invention of precise notation in the 11th century: first surviving examples in the church works of Pérotin and (possibly) his contemporary Léonin. Now musical voices could interweave with or bounce off each other in a dynamic but

orderly way - the musical equivalent of the balancing of opposed lateral forces in the 'flying buttresses' of Gothic architecture. By the Renaissance, the term 'discant' was virtually interchangeable with counterpoint, and the latter eventually replaced it.

So, a clear line of development? By no means, for the evolution of musical terms follows its own quixotic rules. The idea of a voice 'descanting' against a chant line – usually above it – led, through habit probably, to the higher voices being labelled descants, the term still interchangeable with 'soprano' in choral or recorder music. For others it was the original improvisatory aspect that stuck, which is what James Boswell had in mind when he described how Dr Johnson 'used to descant critically on the dishes which had been at table'. It was only in the 20th century that the word 'descant' became

associated with high soprano (or 'treble') lines soaring above hymns - especially at carol concerts. Thus an effect which for many sounds reassuringly ancient is, in fact, a neogothic, modern invention: more Pugin than Pérotin, more Lutyens than Léonin.

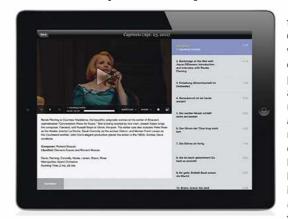
Culture vultures



So, the Brits are cultured, after all. A survey has revealed that people in the UK are more likely to have been to see an opera, dance or ballet performance in the last year than many of our European cousins, including those in Germany or Italy. The study, published by the European Commission, found that 22 per cent of people in the UK had been to an opera, dance or ballet in the last 12 months compared with the European Union average of 18 per cent, and the 17 and 19 per cent in Italy and Germany respectively. But the British still lag behind the Swedes, who claim the dizzying heights of 34 per cent. See Richard Morrison, p23

APP REVIEW

Every issue we explore a recent digital product



Met Opera on Demand £93 a year; £9 a month

New York's Metropolitan Opera's on-demand service has been available for some time but it was only last year that this heavyweight of the opera world moved on to iPad. The 'Met Opera on Demand' app includes access to 132

filmed recordings of Met Opera productions - 66 of which are high definition - and over 300 audio recordings of performances from as far back as 1936 (the earliest filmed recording is of Donizetti's Don Pasquale from 1979, the most recent is Handel's Giulio Cesare from earlier this year). Highlights include soprano Renée Fleming performing in Strauss's Capriccio, Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* starring tenor Luciano Pavarotti and

soprano Anna Netrebko as Massenet's Manon. There are subtitles in several languages for each performance, you can bookmark your top performances in a 'favourites' section and there are links to well written, detailed synopses for each opera. This is a real treasure-trove for opera fans, with the only drawback being the app needs wi-fi to work. ★★★



Great and mighty youngsters

It's time for a beautifully phrased 'Congratulations!' to Luke McWatters and Laura Barraclough, who have been crowned Radio 2's Young Choristers of the Year 2013. The pair enjoyed their moment of victory at the final at St Martin-in-the-Fields, where they performed to a live audience and a panel of judges including composer Bob Chilcott and choir director Suzi Digby. Mendelssohn proved a winning choice for both - McWatters, 13, who sings at Temple Church in London, performed 'Oh for the Wings of a Dove', while Barraclough, 11, a chorister at Trinity Church in Sloane Square, opted for 'Oh rest in the Lord' from Elijah. The pair win a trophy, £500 of singing lessons and appearances on future BBC programmes.

TWITTER ROOM

Who's saying what on the micro-blogging site



@HewittJSB Just eating in Tokyo hotel when in walks Brahms, until I realized it was Radu Lupu! Nice to meet him after all these years!

Behind every beard lurks a potential keyboard soulmate, as pianist Angela Hewitt (left) discovers

@EricWhitacre BBC: "UK braced for worst storm in years." Flashlight (torch)? Check. Dried foods? Check. Single malt Scotchy Scotch? Checkity check check.

As Britain's weather musters up its most dastardly forces, composer Eric Whitacre is nothing if not prepared...

@FinghinCollins Appropriately enough, I'm practising Jardins sous la pluie.

...while pianist Finghin Collins makes the most of the rainy onslaught

@tasminlittle Off to Americaaaaa! Biq Apple: I'm comin' to take a BIG BITE!

Violinist Tasmin Little sharpens her teeth for New York

@BramwellTovey

Waiting to get kids from piano, reread their old text messages & realized they only ever write about transport arrangements #TaxiService The realities of parenthood dawn

on conductor Bramwell Tovey (right)



Notes from the piano stool David Owen Norris



ast autumn I reviewed all the recordings of Britten's opera ■ *Peter Grimes*, preparing a sort of live Building a Library for the Barbican's Britten centenary celebrations. Tricky business indeed. Who am I to choose between Langridge, Rolfe Johnson, Vickers and Pears himself? Not to mention the others, but those are the ones I had the luck to work with. Peter

Grimes was the first opera I ever saw, oddly enough: the coincidence may excuse some slight reminiscence.

I first met Philip Langridge while taking part in a recording of another Britten opera, The Turn of the Screw, in Snape Maltings in Aldeburgh. The ghosts were clearly very much in evidence. Every time I played the Peter Quint chord on the celesta, an icy draught ruffled the scores on the players' music stands. Just the wind, perhaps: except that at the very moment in the opera when Miles blows the candle out, the power failed, and we were plunged into a thoughtprovoking pitch darkness as Miles sang on: "Twas I who blew it! 'Twas I who blew it!'

Jon Vickers picked me up by the lapels and glared into my face. 'Don't you ever do that again,' he roared...

Tony Rolfe Johnson was a guest on a Radio 4 show I used to present. I sat at the piano sketching in foghorns and distant manhunts while he stalked round the studio doing the Mad Scene from Grimes - even better than on his recording. I have wellington boots in my mind. He must have brought them to get into character.

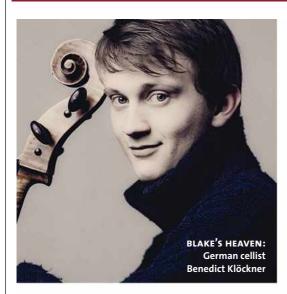
I accompanied Peter Pears's masterclasses for a time. The most remarkable moment I can remember was when a student explained that he couldn't sing Lensky's aria *legato* because he had to breathe halfway through the phrase. 'Legato has nothing to do with breathing', said Sir Peter. 'It's about thinking. I could sing you this melody, taking a breath after each note, and you will swear it is legato.' And he did, and we did.

Jon Vickers taught me an even more valuable lesson. I bashed through some Wagner for him at Covent Garden one day. He reached an enormous penultimate top A, and I rattled away on a dominant seventh underneath, watching carefully to catch his final note. Aha, a twitch of the glottis! And I banged down the tonic chord. False alarm! He was still in the middle of his magnificent note, and my cadentio interruptus spun him round as if I'd shot him. He picked me up by the lapels and glared into my face. 'Don't you ever do that again,' he roared. And I never have.

Come to think, that was about the time he was singing *Grimes*. Perhaps he was getting into character too. David Owen Norris is a pianist, composer and radio presenter

MUSIC TO MY EARS

What the classical world has been listening to this month



HOWARD BLAKE composer



I recently heard Christian Gerhaher sing Schubert's Die schöne Müllerin live in Salzburg, and was absolutely knocked out by the performance - it was on a par with the great Dietrich

Fischer-Dieskau. He was accompanied by Gerold Huber who was similarly magnificent. Equally considered and prepared by both of them, it was so perfectly balanced. This is in some ways unusual, as accompanists tend to work for all sorts of people this, in contrast, was a really cohesive performance. ■ I also recently went along to Cadogan Hall to hear

- violinist Joshua Bell lead the Academy of St Martin in the Fields in **Beethoven**'s Seventh from the front desk of the First Violins. It was absolutely terrific. I've always heard this symphony with a huge orchestra before, but the ASMF has a relatively small number of strings – and when those strings play, it sounds like one person, which is very special. The balance also seemed marvellous and the textures were so clear.
- When I went to the Royal Festival Hall to hear the Philharmonia play **Brahms**, the conductor Andris Nelsons couldn't make it as he was ill. So instead, we had Jac van Steen, who gave the best performance of Brahms's Third Symphony I have ever heard. It's a hard symphony to conduct, and the first movement in particular can trip people up, but this performance had me digging out the score when I got home.
- At a recent concert at the Berlin Konzerthaus, I heard my friend and musical partner Benedict

OUR CHOICES

The BBC Music team's current favourites



Oliver Condy Editor It's Christmas, so it must be time to subject

my colleagues to my 13-CD EMI Classics collection 'Great Cathedral Organs'. Within its riches lurks a rather splendid rendition of Dupré's kaleidoscopic Variations sur un Noël based on the ancient tune Noël Nouvelet. It's spiritedly played here on the mighty Harrison & Harrison at Ely Cathedral in a 1967 recording by the then director of music Arthur Wills.



Jeremy Pound Deputy editor Higginbottom has been

conducting the Choir of New College, Oxford for an impressive 37 years, six of which were dogged by yours truly yowling away in the Decani trebles. As Higginbottom racks up his 38th and final Christmas with the choir, it would be churlish not to dig out and enjoy again their superbly sung - if ever so slightly quirkily programmed - Nativitas disc from 1997. Festive, and fun



Rebecca Franks Reviews editor There's a pair of short Christmas

Iullabies by Arvo Pärt which I love for their simplicity and purity. Written for adults 'and the child within every one of us', they are full of hope and consolation – the *Christmas* Lullaby is a warm evocation of Mary lying her son in a manger (though there are starker moments). Estonian Lullaby has an almost childlike, serene melody. There's a charming 2012 recording of them on ECM.

Klöckner get a standing ovation playing my Diversions for cello and orchestra alongside Haydn's D major Cello Concerto, while in the same programme was Stravinsky's Concerto in D and Haydn's 'Drumroll' Symphony. I was so thrilled to hear the Haydn and the Stravinsky on the same programme, while the Konzerthaus is such a magnificent hall - it used to be in what was East Berlin, but has now been done up and is spectacular. Howard Blake's CD The Barber of Neville, conducted by Neville Marriner, is out now on Pentatone

XUEFEI YANG guitarist



Since making my JS Bach Concertos recording, I have continued to listen to more of his works. I have found myself listening to his keyboard partitas, and particularly enjoy

Murray Perahia's recording which is so full of life. By coincidence, last week I was in San Francisco and heard András Schiff play all six in a single concert.

■ I have just received my very first piece from a Chinese composer, Chen Yi. It's called Shuo Chang. Shuo Chang is the Chinese art of musical storytelling in which a musician would sing and speak while telling stories, and play a drum in the interludes while a group of Chinese traditional instrumentalists play the accompaniment, led by the Sanxian (a three-string lute). To get myself accustomed to this genre, I've been listening to recordings by the



musician Luo Yusheng. I have also been listening to the Brazilian guitarist Baden Powell play the opening 'Abertura' to Os Afro Sambas. He makes his small six-string instrument sound like an ensemble, with a wide

palette of colours and textures, from tight percussive sounds imitating Brazilian and African instruments to singing melodies floating above. I have long appreciated Brazilian music, and the Afro Sambas are a great listen – they explore the rhythmic roots of popular Brazilian music and are wonderfully spiritual. ■ I often find myself putting on jazz for relaxation. While flying into Los Angeles recently, I listened to Ella Fitzgerald. I feel relaxed in the company of her warm voice and her interpretations of popular pieces from the Great American Songbook really speak to

me. Looking out of the plane window, I reflected that, somewhere below, Ella was resting peacefully in the Inglewood Cemetry, while hundreds of metres above her voice was singing out through my headphones.

'Sojourn, The Very Best of Xuefei Yang' is out on EMI/ Warner now

ALAN OKE tenor



Nowadays I do a lot of music streaming, partly because I'm trying to avoid getting more and more possessions and also because it's so wonderful being able to choose so

many different versions of something. Take the Beethoven Quartets, for example - the house wouldn't be big enough to have all the recordings of them. I recently downloaded the Hungarian Quartet playing the late Quartets and it's beautiful. It's not nearly as highly polished as most modern recordings, but I like that - there are other priorities. This feels more like a recording of a live concert. It doesn't sound like retake after retake.

■ I've also been listening to a recording by tenor Adrian Thompson of Britten's Nocturne, Serenade

BRITTEN enade • Les Illuminations Nocturne

and Les Illuminations on Naxos. It is absolutely beautiful singing, so light and high - there's never any feeling of strain and I think it's absolutely gorgeous. Although the music is highly sophisticated, his singing is never affected.

OUR CHOICES

The BBC Music team's current favourites



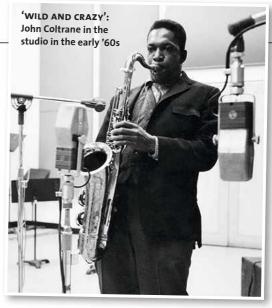
Neil McKim Production editor In search of festive music

recommendations. I turned to our December 2007 issue when our writers chose their favourite (and worst) Christmas discs. One top choice was Bach's Christmas Oratorio, recorded by the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists under John Eliot Gardiner. It may be an old favourite, but Gardiner and his musicians forge it anew with terrific musical energy.



Elizabeth Davis Staff writer Why listen to one Christmas carol when

you can listen to them all? I've been tucking greedily into Vaughan Williams's Fantasia on Christmas Carols which cherry-picks music from carols including On Christmas Night all Christians Sing and This is the Truth Sent from Above. Richard Hickox conducts the Joyful Company of Singers and City of London Sinfonia in a splendidly rich performance on Chandos.



- Another recording I downloaded recently was Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting the LA Philharmonic in Lutosławski's symphonies. I heard the Third Symphony performed by the Berlin Philharmonic at the Proms last year and was knocked over by it. All his music is of his own; it's also very stirring, without being sentimental - in the same way that Janáček manages to stay away from sentimentality. But there's also a sense of danger, a pent-up power that could explode.
- I listen to quite a lot of John Coltrane, particularly the album Giant Steps. It's phenomenal – wild and crazy and yet tremendously structured. At the same time as sounding completely free he is completely technically adept which is lovely to encounter. The Arthaus DVD of Grimes on the Beach, with Alan Oke in the title role, will be reviewed in a future issue

AND MUSIC TO YOUR EARS...

You tell us what you've been enjoying on disc and in the concert hall



Dave Lloyd Sittingbourne, Kent I'm listening to John McCabe's Les martinets noirs in a supercharged

recording by Orchestra Nova and conductor George Vass (Dutton CDLX 7290). This piece makes you visualise the swirling swifts darting here and there on a summer evening. The other tracks on the CD create visual images of beasts in the rainforest (Rainforest I & II) and a long crescendo giving the image of a camel caravan coming into view (Caravan for string orchestra).



Tim Dufton Stockton-on-Tees I am an IT consultant and often need to shut out the rest of

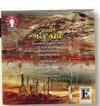
the world to concentrate on the work on my screen. I have dipped into

opera many times over the years, but started listening to Wagner on a project when I was in Birmingham three years ago. I bought myself a ticket to Tristan and Isolde at Symphony Hall. It was an amazing experience. When I saw Opera North were doing the *Ring* cycle over four years, I had to go. I'm eagerly awaiting Götterdämmerung in 2014!



Alastair Durden Thurlestone, Devon Having recently visited Vienna, the music of Beethoven,

Mozart. Haydn and of course Johann Strauss II was much in evidence, but I was reminded of another Austrian composer who became director of the Vienna State Academy, namely Franz Schmidt, whose music is seldom heard today. His oratorio The Book with



the Seven Seals which I have just been listening to contains some powerful, dramatic music and the final

'Hallelujah!' chorus simply takes your breath away! I love his four symphonies - the orchestrations and harmonies are reminiscent of Richard Strauss in their opulence, but they speak with a very original voice.



Andrew Jackson Birmingham My attention was recently caught by a live recording from

Powell Hall, of Christian Tetzlaff playing Szymanowski's First Violin Concerto, followed by Scriabin's Poem Of Ecstasy, both featuring the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra in 2008. There is a continual overload to the senses during both works. The recording is absolutely captivating if you are into this repertoire, the recording is very clear and it's excellent value for money.



Arthur Danner Oregon, US I've been listening to the music of Olivier

Messiaen and Kaija Saariaho as played by pianist Gloria Cheng with the Calder Quartet. The disc, called The Edge of Light, was reviewed in the May issue of BBC Music but I've been following Gloria Cheng's career for 25 years. Messiaen's music offers continual discoveries for me and I had the privilege in 2003 of hearing Cheng play Messiaen's Oiseaux exotiques with the LA Philharmonic under Pierre Boulez. It was a stunning performance and is on my list of 'concerts to remember'. Tell us what concerts or recordings you've been enjoying by emailing us at musictomyears@classical-music.com

WAI TONG KWANG

NEWS<mark>IN</mark>BRIEF



THE MAGIC LUTE

Do you know what a 'bandura' is? Northamptonshire Maths teacher Paul Allan certainly does, as this was the word that he laid down gloriously to win the British Scrabble championship. Mr Allan, who we suspect doesn't get out much, scored 86 points for the word, which we have since learned is a type of Ukrainian lute.

STRAD FOR SALE

First she lost it. Now she doesn't want it. The Stradivarius that made national headlines when it was stolen from violinist Min-Jyn Kim at Euston Station in 2010 is being put up for sale at Tarisio auction house. Valued at around £2m, the instrument was recovered earlier this year but, alas, Min-Jyn Kim has in the meantime found a new four-stringed love of her life. The poor Strad was unavailable for comment.

SALTY STRINGS

And on the subject of recovered fiddles, the violin that was played by bandleader Wallace Hartley as the Titanic sank in 1912 has been sold for £900,000 at auction in Wiltshire. Recently discovered in a loft in Yorkshire, there had been some doubts about the instrument's authenticity, but tests revealing salt deposits in its wood appear to confirm that it's the real thing.

ELEGANT ARM

Following the recent publication of pictures of Roger Federer playing the violin, one of his biggest fans is ruing the Swiss tennis legend's missed career. 'He has a terrific bowing arm,' swoons violin virtuoso Anne-Sophie Mutter. 'I am fascinated by its lightness, its elegance. He is a great athlete and an admirable man.'

Lend me your years...

Listening tastes develop with age, says research

Forget Shakespeare's seven ages of man. If you want to know how old someone is, simply look at his or her tastes in music. Or so suggests new research from the University of Cambridge which has found that the type of music we prefer to listen to is not set in stone from an early age but evolves over the years. Moreover, the researchers have identified five distinct

listening habits. 'Intense', the first stage, is typically defined by a teenage love of punk and metal, soon giving way to 'Contemporary' as we explore electronica and R&B in young adulthood. The onset of stressful jobs and families leads us into the chill-out zone that is our 'Mellow' phase before becoming 'Sophisticated' has us investigating the joys of classical music and jazz. Finally, as the grim reaper looms and we enter our 'Unpretentious' stage, we simply give up trying and

are happy to listen to any old gumph. Interesting indeed... and who are we to argue? We would, however, like to point out that BBC Music Magazine readers are.

of course, all Sophisticated' from birth...



AFTER HOURS

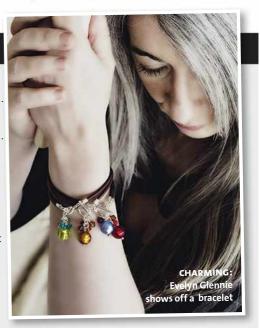
Musicians and their hobbies

EVELYN GLENNIE

Percussionist

JEWELLERY DESIGN

A bit like percussion, I've been collecting jewellery for a long time. It's been an interest of mine since I was a little girl. I used to visit the Orkney Islands - my mother's side is Orcadian – where they have a specific type of silver jewellery which I like very much. My first range of jewellery - called 'Percussion' - was worked by hand with a company called Ortak. The design itself is really a team effort now. I come out with an idea and anyone who's working here might say 'Well, how about this, how about that?' and together we put the designs down. For the second range I worked with a company called Valentina, but we do all of the designs ourselves. It's something that you can do any time - when you're practising music you need the instruments there, but with designing jewellery I could



be walking through an airport or going to a market and I'll see something that triggers an idea. Or I could be playing a phrase of music and something enters my head. The challenge is making people aware that Evelyn Glennie also makes jewellery!

Farewell to...



BERNARD ROBERTS

Born 1933 Pianist

Best known for his interpretations of Beethoven and Bach, Bernard Roberts was a self-effacing performer who eschewed theatrics on the stage, but who nevertheless became one of the most respected pianists of the late 20th century. Roberts was born

in Manchester and at the age of 15 won a scholarship to the city's Royal College of Music. He went on to study with Ferdinand Rauter before making his Wigmore Hall debut in 1957, and in 1979 he performed Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 at the Proms. He was also a respected chamber musician, forming a piano trio with violinist Manoug Parikian and cellist Amaryllis Fleming in 1975. Roberts was also a model railway enthusiast, and built a model of the London-Manchester line in the basement of his home.

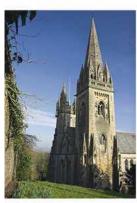
Also remembered...

Leslie Head (b1922) A familiar figure on London's musical fringe, conductor Leslie Head started as an orchestral horn player and went on to direct the Kensington Symphony Orchestra for 30 years. With the KSO he conducted a number of works in their UK premiere, including Bartók's Wooden Prince Suite and Sibelius's Tiera. From 1963 he ran Opera Viva and, later, Pro-Opera, working with the likes of bass John Tomlinson and soprano Pauline Tinsley.

Lawrence Leighton Smith (b1936) Smith was one of the best-loved conductors of the Colorado Springs Philharmonic. He had been its music director since 2000, and the last concert he conducted was Beethoven Symphony No. 9 in April 2011. Earlier in his life he worked with the Louisville and New Jersey Symphony Orchestras.

As we went to press, we heard of the sad death of composer Sir John Tavener. A full obituary will appear in the January issue.

Choir cuts at Llandaff Cathedral



Llandaff Cathedral in Cardiff (left) is consulting on proposals to make seven musicians redundant to help make a dent in its anticipated deficit of £81,000. Five lay clerks, one choral scholar and the assistant organist are at risk of losing their jobs, affecting choral evensong services on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

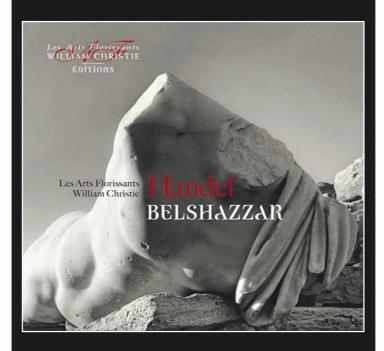
A spokesperson for the Cathedral said: 'It is with a heavy heart that we have taken the decision to put a number of roles in the Cathedral at risk of redundancy... We have considered all our options very carefully and feel these plans are the best way forward to enable us to save money while

ensuring our choral tradition remains as good as it can be, and our music ministry has a secure future.'

If the proposed changes go ahead there would be a budget to pay adult choristers for occasional services at weekends and special seasons such as Advent and Christmas. The Cathedral's voluntary parish choir will continue.

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PPA Columnist of the Year

The Richard Morrison column

The British visit the opera more often than the Germans. So what?



n the grim old days when the trophy shelf at Arsenal Football Club was as bare as Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard (this season will be very different!), we ardent Gooners used to console ourselves with one thought: 'Oh well, at least we beat Tottenham'. I feel much the same way now about the results of a vast, pancontinental survey into cultural attendance published by the European Union.

It shows that just 22 per cent of British people claimed (or confessed) to attending an opera, dance or ballet performance in the 12 months prior to being questioned. A bit dismal, really, after 70 years of hugely expensive state subsidy, supposedly to popularise those art forms. But hey, at least we beat Germany and Italy! In the land of Wagner, only 19 per cent of people apparently go to the opera or ballet, while in Italy - the founding citadel of opera the figure is a scarcely believable 17 per cent.

The figure for concert-going is even more flattering for the British. A respectable 37 per cent of us heard live music last year - though that includes everything from stadium rock gigs to your kids' school concerts. Taken alongside industry figures showing that Britain has overtaken Germany to become the third largest consumer of recorded music in the world (after the US and Japan), it does indicate that the national image we have of ourselves - cheerily lowbrow, when compared with

those cultured, sophisticated Continentals – is unduly modest.

The wider implications of the EU's report are equally fascinating. Across Europe, it seems, people are far less culturally inclined than they were before the recession. Indeed, the percentage of those enjoying any cultural activity at all has dropped by a whopping 24 per cent in five years. Oddly, even the number watching (mostly free) cultural programmes on TV is down. This isn't a case of people saying 'I can't afford culture at the

your default culture is actually Hollywood, rather than what's being created by your neighbours. The European dream of mutual understanding between nations looks a little distant – at least on the cultural front.

As for the British figures, two other statistics give pause for thought. The first seems to disprove the old theory that people don't go to the opera because the tickets are too expensive. In fact, only 16 per cent of those surveyed in Britain gave that

us took part in singing activities last year, compared with 38 per cent in Denmark and almost as high a percentage in Finland and Sweden. And the percentage of people regularly playing musical instruments in Britain is at an even lower level.

So, a mixed picture. Compared with the Italians and the Greeks - who (despite their incredible cultural heritages) seem to have turned their backs on the arts a fair proportion of British people do regularly engage with some sort of culture. But compared with those arty Scandinavians, we are well and truly in the Dark Ages. What accounts for the enormous appetite for culture in the Nordic countries? The freezing temperatures? The long winter nights? The saunas? Maybe, but the main answer is surely education. In all those countries the 'habit of art' is instilled in children at every level of their schooling. Young Swedes or Finns don't regard serious culture as elitist or difficult, because they have been nurtured to enjoy it from their earliest years.

Yes, the British may now go to the opera more often than the Italians, or to museums more often than the French. But the percentages are still deplorably low. Until we address the philistine imbalances in our educational system, we don't deserve to give ourselves even the most ironic pat on the back.

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and columnist of The Times

Compared with those arty Scandinavians, we are well and truly in the Dark Ages

moment'. Rather, people seem to be so worried about keeping their jobs and paying the rent that they have little time, energy or inclination left for the finer things in life.

And the further south you go, the worse it gets. The Scandinavians top the list for almost all varieties of cultural engagement, whereas the Mediterranean countries score well below average. If the survey is to be believed, half the population of Greece hasn't read a book for years, and virtually nobody in Portugal goes to the opera. The other startling revelation is that Europeans are pretty bad about sampling each other's cultural products. Whether you are Latvian, Irish or Cretan, it seems,

as their main reason for not attending, whereas 52 per cent said it was 'lack of interest'. Of course, that lack of interest could extend to not knowing how much the tickets cost. Even so, the problem of attracting newcomers to opera does appear to be far more about breaking down social, psychological and educational barriers than it does about overcoming financial ones.

And secondly, the percentage of those actually making music in Britain (as opposed to enjoying it passively) is depressingly low. Despite the much-heralded 'renaissance in choral singing' prompted by Gareth Malone's TV programmes and government schemes, just nine per cent of



Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker has enchanted audiences around the world for over a century, but what is the secret to its enduring popularity? Daniel Jaffé tells the tale of a magical masterpiece

hen the young Clara's eccentric godfather, Drosselmeyer, drops in bearing gifts, it is clear this will be a Christmas like no other. Bewigged and wearing an eyepatch, Drosselmeyer is a clockand watch-maker, creator of the most ingenious automata. Yet it is to the least of his creations, a nutcracker carved in the form of a soldier, to whom Clara devotes herself and ultimately rescues when he comes to life...

Such is the kernel of this famous ballet, whose fate curiously mirrors that of its wooden protagonist. Often described as

the least of Tchaikovsky's three ballets, it has been derided by scholars for its 'trite' plot (Clara's ultimate reward, after rescuing her wooden prince, is a child's paradise of sweets and hot beverages). Yet The Nutcracker has become the most beloved of all ballets, a regular Christmas production on almost every major stage, especially in the United States where it has become as much a part of American tradition as the German Christmas tree. How has this happened? And what is it that has eluded Tchaikovsky experts but has been instinctively grasped by the ballet's millions of fans?

FROM AN EARLY AGE, Tchaikovsky had relished stage works involving magic or fantasy such as Weber's Der Freischütz and Mozart's Don Giovanni. After seeing Adam's Giselle he became a ballet devotee. Such was his enthusiasm that, not long after graduating from the St Petersburg Conservatory in 1866, he created a short ballet to entertain his young nieces called The Lake of Swans. His nephew, Yury Davydov, recalled that he not only composed the music but 'invented the steps and pirouettes, and danced them himself, showing the performers what he required of them. At such moments Uncle Pyotr, red in the face, wet with perspiration as he sang the tune, presented a pretty amusing sight.

Tchaikovsky soon developed this private entertainment into a full-length ballet, Swan Lake. Eventually staged in Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre in 1877, where it was hobbled with mediocre choreography and indifferently

In brief

Composed: 1892

Influences:

Tchaikovsky's ballet is based on Dumas's adaptation of ETA Hoffmann's 1816 story The Nutcracker and the Mouse King. The ballet plot is similar to the original, though Hoffmann's central character is called Marie, not Clara, and is taken to a magic kingdom of dolls, not sweets

The first performance:

Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, 18 December 1892, conducted by Riccardo Drigo and choreographed by Lev Ivanov. Antonietta Dell'Era danced the role of the Sugar-Plum Fairy.

danced, its music nonetheless stood head and shoulders above the usual run of ballet scores. It was not long before Tchaikovsky's talent was recognised by the head of the directorate of Imperial Theatres, Ivan Vsevolozhsky.

One of ballet's unsung heroes,

Vsevolozhsky not only nurtured Tchaikovsky's talent for the form, inspiring him to compose Sleeping Beauty and The Nutcracker, but he also raised ballet to a high art-form. A one-time diplomat, Vsevolozhsky had developed his love for French culture (shared by Tchaikovsky) and

particularly ballet while posted in Paris. He also had a gift for drawing and design: rumour had it that his diplomatic career was wrecked by his talent as a caricaturist, which he applied to all, regardless of rank.



The plot: Het 1 It's Christmas eve in the house of the Stahlbaum family, where a beautiful Christmas tree is being decorated. The children, including Clara (left), are invited to admire it before the festive fun begins and gifts are handed out. At eight o'clock, Clara's godfather Drosselmeyer (below) enters, bringing presents that he has made. These include dancing dolls and, for Clara, a wooden nutcracker shaped like a soldier. Fritz, Clara's brother, is not impressed. He breaks the Nutcracker, to Clara's devastation. Later, when all have gone to bed, Clara

comes downstairs to tend her injured toy but soon falls asleep. At midnight, she wakes to find that the tree has grown. Filling the room, meanwhile, is an army of giant mice, who

march towards her. The Nutcracker springs to life, and leads his own army of toy soldiers into battle

against the mice. Clara sees the Nutcracker struggling against the *Mouse King* (top), so hurls her slipper. Distracted, the Mouse King is stabbed by the Nutcracker and battle is over. To Clara's amazement, the Nutcracker grows into a Prince, who leads her into a magical landscape.

Now in charge of the Mariinsky Theatre and eager to raise its standards, Vsevolozhsky soon proved an able administrator with a genius for devising ballets. Starting with Sleeping Beauty (1890), he created productions in which music, choreography and design (he himself designing many hundreds of splendid costumes) were united into a single concept, rather than, as had previously been the case, haphazardly thrown together. Vsevolozhsky's approach would be emulated and then developed in the early 20th century by the legendary impresario, Serge Diaghilev.

The great success of *Sleeping Beauty*, involving the close collaboration between Vsevolozhsky, Tchaikovsky and the legendary choreographer Marius Petipa, inevitably prompted Vsevolozhsky to plan a sequel from the same team. He was drawn to Hoffmann's *The Nutcracker*, as re-written by Alexandre Dumas senior, which was enjoying popularity in Russia. But Tchaikovsky, according to the somewhat unreliable memoirs of his brother, Modest, was 'not much pleased with the subject'. Tchaikovsky certainly admired the dark fantasy of Hoffmann's original, and may have been disappointed by Dumas's tamer

version. We can't be certain, as no correspondence from this early stage in *The Nutcracker*'s creation has been found: possibly – as was the case with *Sleeping Beauty* – Tchaikovsky initially discussed the project face-to-face with Vsevolozhsky without a formal contract.

Early in 1891, Tchaikovsky was working against the clock to compose both *Nutcracker* and an opera with which it was to be double-billed,

Yolanta, before an imminent tour in the US. By April, having composed Nutcracker's overture and first five numbers, as well as the 'Waltz of the Snowflakes', he had

reached the end of his tether. He wrote to Vsevolozhsky begging for a postponement. The various ballet and opera characters, he said, 'frighten, horrify, and pursue me, waking and sleeping, mocking me with the thought that I shall not cope with them'.

No sooner had the ink dried than he received news that his beloved sister, Sasha, had died. Vsevolozhsky naturally wrote back reassuring Tchaikovsky that everything could be postponed a year. Relieved of this immediate burden, Tchaikovsky fulfilled his tour (obliged by having already spent a good



Tchaikovsky was 'not much pleased with the subject'

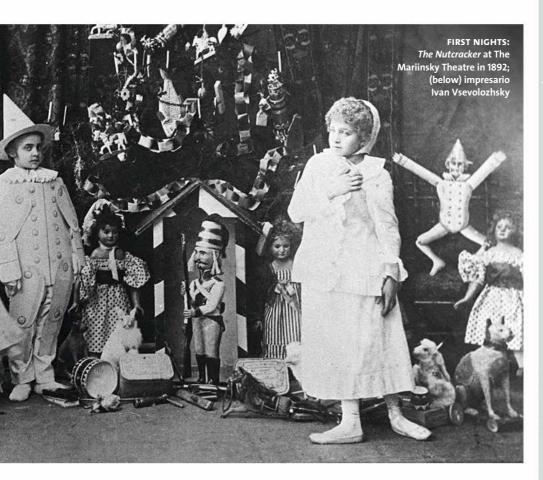
He returned newly enthused about the ballet. Inspired by a discovery he made in Paris, he wrote to his publisher about 'a new orchestral instrument, something between a small piano and a glockenspiel with a divinely marvellous

sound... It is called the "Celesta Mustel" and it costs 1,200 francs... I would like to ask you to order this instrument. You will lose nothing on it... you will sell it to the directorate of the

Theatres, when they need it for the ballet.' He begged his publisher to keep the celesta a secret, 'for I am afraid that Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov will get wind of it and use its unusual effects sooner than me...'

Tchaikovsky had used the glockenspiel in his still little-known Orchestral Suite No. 1, composed in 1879. The March in which the glockenspiel appears anticipates *Nutcracker*'s soundworld, including the celebrated 'Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy'. The celesta's advantage over the glockenspiel was its ability to create through its keyboard the effect of a





splashing fountain, as required by Petipa to accompany the Sugar-Plum Fairy. It helped, too, that the celesta's sound is reminiscent of the musical boxes one might expect to find in Drosselmeyer's clockwork world.

Another orchestral colour unfamiliar to Tchaikovsky's audience was the purring of flutter-tongued flutes, a technique he had recently learned from a flautist who had once been his harmony student: he used this sound to depict the cascading river of Rose essence which greets the arrival of Clara and her Nutcracker prince in Act II. Even beside these exotic colours, Tchaikovsky's mastery of evocative orchestral colours remains peerless. His depiction of the moonlit room just before midnight is an evocative tapestry of fluttering string tremolandos, shuddering bass clarinet, downward plunging harp glissandos and twittering woodwind.

Another striking feature is the score's array of children's instruments, including toy trumpets, toy drums, cuckoos, quails and cymbals, all intended to be played on-stage by the child performers in the opening party scene. Tchaikovsky and Vsevolozhsky had planned from the outset that children would play a major role in *The Nutcracker*, a highly unusual and controversial decision for that time. From their correspondence, and from Petipa's original choreographic plan, we know

that Vsevolozhsky originally intended to have the children perform a series of national dances in costumes presented as Christmas gifts in Act I. This was confounded by Petipa, who suddenly insisted that the sequence be replaced by solos and variations for the Mariinsky's principal adult dancers. Vsevolozhsky's frustration is clear from an uncharacteristically unguarded comment to Tchaikovsky in which, despite Petipa's huge success with Sleeping Beauty, he called his chief choreographer 'old fashioned'. Petipa, having (rather grudgingly, one suspects) cast the roles of Clara, her brother Fritz and the Nutcracker with students from the theatre school, then inconveniently (or possibly conveniently from his point of view) fell ill just as the ballet went into rehearsal.

Choreographic duties fell to Petipa's assistant, Lev Ivanov. Though noted for his superb *corps de ballet* sequences, Ivanov showed little interest in individual dances, often allowing these to be reworked by the solo dancers themselves. He showed even less interest in the extensive pantomime needed for the children in the opening scenes. The result, by all accounts, was too ill-disciplined to charm its audience. One critic wrote: 'In the first scene, the entire stage is filled with children, who run about, blow their whistles, hop and jump, are naughty, and interfere





ORIENTAL COLOUR: the Chinese Tea Dance



As we enter The Land of Sweets at the start of Act II, the storyline itself pretty much disappears - this act is by and large a celebration in dance of Clara's heroic rescue of the Prince. Cue a colourful display of truly edible dances, many with a national slant: the Spanish Hot Chocolate Dance begins the display, followed by the Arabian Coffee Dance and the Chinese Tea Dance (above); next up is a Russian Trepak (top), the Dance of the Reed Pipes and the appearance of the magnificent Mother Ginger; then, after the Waltz of the Flowers, we are treated to the famous Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy. After a final waltz, the Prince and Clara leave in a sleigh... only for Clara to wake up back at home, clutching the Nutcracker. Was it all a dream?

with the oldsters dancing. In large amounts this is unbearable.' Worse still was the battle between the mice and the toys. Somebody had the idea of casting young members of a military academy to play the toy soldiers who, it seems, got carried away attacking the mice with their toy rifles – cue pandemonium. Even the artist Alexandre Benois, who admired Vsevolozhsky and later inspired Diaghilev to follow his example, found the battle scene 'quite senseless and amateurish.'

What went wrong? Had Tchaikovsky and Vsevolozhsky badly miscalculated? Several scholars have blamed the scenario, which they claim failed to inspire Tchaikovsky. The fact the ballet involves some of his most inventive and evocative orchestration is merely, they say, to disguise the poverty of his invention: witness the 'short-breathed' and

What went wrong? Had Tchaikovsky badly miscalculated?

'exceedingly simple' character of several of the ballet's themes, and the fact Tchaikovsky supplemented these with so many 'borrowed' themes – for instance, the 'Arabian Dance' based on a Georgian lullaby.

Yet the fact remains that he was far from played out – witness the Sixth Symphony that was still to come, or even the remarkable tone poem *Voyevoda* which, though he rejected it, has since been widely recognised as one of his most remarkable late works. And the fact is that Tchaikovsky, once past his initial creative crisis, described *Nutcracker* in a letter to Modest as 'excellent', while *Yolanta*, the opera on which he had had high expectations, was in his estimation 'nothing special'.

So might the alleged shortcomings of Tchaikovsky's music in *Nutcracker* have been, in fact, deliberate ploys rather than shortcomings? If *Nutcracker* was originally intended, in a very real sense, as a ballet for



NEW SOUNDS: the celesta inspired Tchaikovsky



The Nuteracker - outside the theatre

How Tchaikovsky's ballet crops up here, there and everywhere in popular culture...

FANTASIA (1940)

As well as mop-wielding Mickey Mouse, Disney's feature-length cartoon has a gorgeously animated section devoted to *The Nutcracker*, including music from the Sugar-Plum Fairy, the Arabian Dance, the Russian Trepak and the Waltz of the Flowers.

BARBIE IN THE NUTCRACKER (2001)

Further cinematic *Nutcracker* delights, as a computer-animated Barbie embarks on a ballet adventure. It is, needless to say, all very pink, though our heroine does dance a neat little Sugar-Plum Fairy routine.

THE SIMPSONS CHRISTMAS STORIES (2005)

'I hope I never hear that God-awful *Nutcracker* music again,' complains a typically grumpy Homer Simpson. And guess what comes next? Yup, the Simpsons cast sings a Christmas medley to the tune of the Act I March.

DUKE ELLINGTON'S THE NUTCRACKER SUITE (1960)

Few musicians have fused the worlds of classical and jazz as sublimely as The Duke, whose 1960 take on Tchaikovsky comes complete with natty titles such as 'Sugar Rum Cherry' and 'Toot Toot Tootie Toot'.

NUT ROCKER (1962)

Two years after Duke Ellington, American rockers B. Bumble & the Stingers were inspired to create their own high-octane arrangement of *The Nutcracker's* March, a version that's been covered by Emerson, Lake and Palmer, among others.

NUTCRACKER (1982)

Joan Collins is in quintessentially sassy form in this splendidly awful British film about a Russian ballerina defecting to the west. Finola Hughes is the dancer in question.

CADBURY'S FRUIT & NUT (1976 etc)

From Frank Muir pootling around in a punt in 1976 to a 1980s office worker being serenaded by a singing chocolate bar and her hunky-chunky almonds, Cadbury's brilliant ad campaign had us all singing 'Everyone's a Fruit and Nut case' to the Dance of the Reed Pipes.

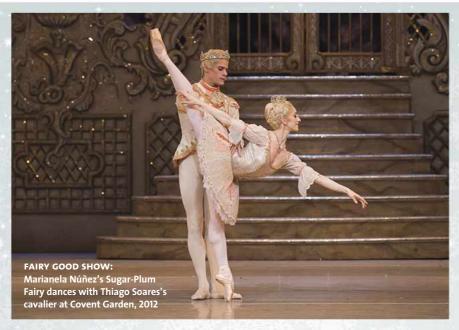
TETRIS (1989)

Block-dropping fun galore, as the Nintendo Gameboy version of this ultra-popular game was accompanied by *The Nutcracker*'s Trepak.

HOSPITAL FOR OVERACTING (1970)

Here's one for sharp-eyed *Nutcracker* spotters, courtesy of Monty Python's 1970 sketch. As Graham Chapman enters the Richard III Ward at the Royal Hospital for Overacting, a group of King Mice pass in the other direction.





Dancing the Sugar-Plum Fairy

Marianela Núñez of the Royal Ballet on tackling one of ballet's best-loved roles

'THE SUGAR-PLUM FAIRY has to wait for the whole of Act I to come in, but it's in Act II that the magic begins. We're in the land of the sweets, which is all white and glittering. It's strange because there's not much drama or storyline – you're in this magical kingdom and you're the Sugar-Plum Fairy – but the music makes you feel so many things. It's heaven. The pas de deux I dance with the cavalier is so beautiful – even when in the rehearsal studio with the piano, it moves me. The music fits perfectly with the steps and the drama, yet it has so many layers. It's the same for all of Tchaikovsky's ballets; his music takes you to a very special place.

'It is a very demanding role. Though not as flashy as other roles, it's so pure. We dance Peter Wright's version, after the original Lev Ivanov choreography, and what's hard is how to make it look easy. I first danced it in 2000 when I was 18, replacing Darcey Bussell who was pregnant, and the experience was incredible. Every time I dance it I look forward to it, and as you get older, you become more mature and discover new things. I'll be dancing it with my husband Thiago Soares again this year – he's my cavalier. I sometimes smile and think "how perfect!" The Nutcracker is on at the Royal Opera House on various dates between 4 December and 16 January, and screened live to cinemas around the country on 12 December

children, this would explain its relatively simple yet brightly coloured themes, and why nearly all the dances, most particularly those in Act I originally intended for child dancers, are relatively short. It may also explain why The Nutcracker, though a 'full-length' ballet, is barely more than half the length of either its predecessors, Swan Lake and Sleeping Beauty: in other words, an ideal length not to tax an audience of young children. The fact that it was originally to be staged as part of a double bill with Yolanta might also explain the ballet's length, yet there was nothing in the contract Tchaikovsky signed to suggest that the two works should be indissolubly linked, and after the initial run of performances the opera and ballet went their separate ways.

If creating a children's ballet was indeed Vsevolozhsky and Tchaikovsky's intention, they were 40 years ahead of their time. But their gauntlet was triumphantly taken up in the 20th century, particularly in the US, with its love of child-friendly fantasies such as The Wizard of Oz, and in Soviet Russia where investment in young talent resulted, and still continues, in producing many fine child dancers. And the psychological depth of Tchaikovsky's music has been realised quite independently - in both countries. The Russian musicologist Boris Asafyev acclaimed Nutcracker as representing 'the ripening soul of a little girl' who grows from playing with dolls to 'the dawn of love through dreams of love of a brave and virile hero', while Maurice Sendak, author of Where the Wild Things Are, found the music 'bristling with implied action,' with 'a subtext alive with wild child cries and belly noises. It is rare and genuine and does justice to the private world of children.'

Absolute Grackers



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A beautifully played and characterised performace by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Simon Rattle, full of atmosphere and including a riotous racket of children's instruments!

Best highlights compilation Prunella Scales (narrator); Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra/Michael Halász

Naxos 8.555342 (CD) £6.99 Naxos GC 983 (Gift card version) £6.99 Tchaikovsky, of course, made his own Suite from the ballet. Here, though, is a good straight-down-the-line introduction for children to the story and music, narrated by Prunella Scales.

Best DVD film Alina Somova, Vladimir Shklyarov, Alexandra Korshunova, Fyodor Lopukhov; Mariinsky Ballet & Orchestra/ Valery Gergiev; chor.

Vasily Vainonen *Warner Classics 2564-65630-9 £12.99*

The camerawork goes for dramatic engagement rather than balletic technique, but this is a charming production with the leading girl – for once – both the correct age and

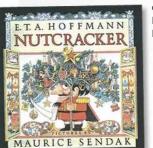


Harmonia Mundi HMU 907493 £15.99

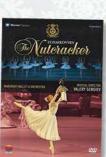
Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn's jazz adaptation (see 'The Nutcracker – outside the theatre', p29) is now something of a classic. Here is a fresh new recording which, enterprisingly, couples it with a performance of Tchaikovsky's original Suite.

Recommended reading ETA Hoffmann's Nutcracker Illustrations Maurice Sendak

Random House ISBN 978-0385348645 £20 Sendak's beautifully illustrated edition of Hoffmann's original tale is partly based



on his designs for Pacific Northwest Ballet's production of *Nutcracker*, and includes a personal introduction.





THE JAMES NAUGHTIE INTERVIEW

PETER PHILLIPS



Today his choir can fill huge venues worldwide performing 450-yearold music. But, reflects the conductor, when he founded The Tallis Scholars 40 years ago, nothing could have seemed more unlikely...

PHOTOGRAPHY RICHARD CANNON

ince he has spent 40 years bringing the music of the Renaissance to life, it is surprising at first, but very reassuring, to hear Peter Phillips say that he has very little idea what it was like to listen to singers in the heyday of Tallis or Byrd or Gibbons. 'This is my version of authenticity, that's all.'

In celebrating the four decades of musicmaking by The Tallis Scholars, which he founded with undergraduate friends at Oxford, Phillips can afford to be relaxed about the question: they have done enough to put aside that argument, by revealing the music for what it is and allowing it to speak for itself.

'Authenticity can be a bit of a trap. With voices, we don't know what they sounded like - no idea at all. With instruments you have. You may think we know what the balance of voices in an ensemble was like, but even then not necessarily. For example, the boys were older, and we know that their voices sometimes broke as late as 18. Puberty came later. But as they grew they had lungs, so what was the sound? I've tried to guess, and it's a fascinating study. But does it matter? No.'

Nothing the singers have done under Phillips's direction since the 1970s has been intended as a performance that's meant to be judged as a reflection. 'I've produced a kind of mock construct of sound,' he explains. 'I



produce an instrument, in voices, which is what I think the music requires.'

And there you have it. The confidence has been there from the start. Ask him when he fell in love with the music, and he finds it easy. 'I was singing in the chapel choir at Winchester - a kind of weak tenor - and we sang Orlando Gibbons's O Clap Your Hands, and that was it. I knew that it had happened.'

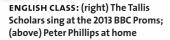
Everything since then has revolved around the sound that captivated him when he first heard that Ascension Day anthem, composed when Gibbons (1583-1625) was still quite

young and sung at the ceremony at which the composer received his Oxford doctorate - the words of Psalm 47 set for eight voices with no soloist, and in a way the model for what The Tallis Scholars became.

Phillips was organ scholar at St John's College – he arrived at Oxford in 1972 – when he and a few friends began to sing the music that had grabbed him as a teenager. He'd been playing Bach fugues and discovered iust as much intellectual excitement in music that was considered at that time to be in a secondary category. 'I'm afraid it really was an experience like that: you meet someone, suddenly you go into a kind of super-drive, and you realise you're in love.' In his case the affair encompassed all the musicians of the high Renaissance, and he has never left them. After 1620, say, you feel his admiration of many composers but it is not the same. They don't put a spell on him. Mention the name of Josquin des Prez, for example, the Flemish master of polyphony who died in 1521, and his eyes take on a dreamy look. 'Josquin's the man. There's no doubt about that.

But when Phillips was a student, the music that has become his life was little known to people who had a passing interest in music and weren't familiar with the church choral tradition. Moreover, the style of singing often did the composers of the 16th century few favours. The Baroque revival was gathering







pace through the 1970s, together with the hair-shirted enthusiasm of some of the single-minded pioneers, but it was slow to reach the vocal repertoire from the previous era. The choral style with which Phillips grew up, familiar to anyone who has passed middle age, was a full-on, rich treatment of Renaissance music that now sounds as dated as some of the recordings of Mozart piano concertos — to take an obvious example — made with a Romantic overlay in the 1950s or '60s. Some of them are fine, but they sound self-indulgent and a little odd to our ears.

We're sitting in Phillips's townhouse in north London, a harpsichord behind him, and very quickly he's describing precisely what it was that he and the singers were trying to establish – a break with a tradition that had become stuffy, even moribund. 'If you listen to the recordings made in the '60s and '70s by the professional groups in those days, well the difference between what they did then and everyone does now, Europe-wide, is enormous. The old sound was weighty, with all the voices going for it, and their idea of expression was to take it quite slowly and make it vibrate, give it a lot of extra colour. But each of the lines in this music has a legitimacy of its own. If those lines bump into each other and then the tuning goes, you can't hear the clarity. You are missing so much - quite apart from the fact that that wobbly noise across the spectrum can be very ugly. Too much mush altogether.'

And when The Tallis Scholars were established as amateurs in the '70s, the problem was even deeper. Renaissance music itself was badly treated. 'The music of that

period was much less sung in the '70s and was mainly confined to church services. Whole concerts of it were very rare – it was assumed that people wouldn't come. Concerts would start with Byrd and end with Britten. It was a procession that left the Renaissance behind.' Today, Palestrina will fill pretty well any hall.

The whole enterprise, then, was a bit of a risk and a struggle when The Tallis Scholars began to grow up and get serious about public performance. To any choral singer who has

'The old sound was weighty, with all the singers going for it'

inherited the enthusiasm that's been built up in recent decades, this will all seem a bit strange: wasn't it always like this? Certainly not.

It was often difficult to recruit musicians to the cause. 'The only way we could progress was to do it with people who did know, and try to do it as well as we could. But one of the difficulties was that we got professional singers in who could sing anything, but they didn't know what to do. And I couldn't really tell them – show them – because I couldn't sing it myself. I had to fall back on adjectives and the expression on my face when they sang in certain ways.'

They were days of discovery. 'Now we have singers who weren't born when the original sound was created. At the beginning the sound that I knew I wanted wasn't there.

And people said it shouldn't be like that. Pedantic people, I'm afraid. There were singers who didn't want to sing like that and academics who didn't think it should be like that. That was the struggle. There was every conceivable objection: type of voice, pitch, you name it.'

There was a tradition that Phillips and his singers appeared to be challenging. 'We had the cathedral choirs and it was thought that this was the ultimate way of doing it. I didn't think it was. Some of them were marvellous, of course, but I didn't want to do it like that. After all, we were giving concerts, not services.'

They persevered, and by the time the '70s had passed, The Tallis Scholars had established themselves sufficiently to face the break with studied amateurism that was becoming inevitable: by the early 1980s they were professional, and Phillips and Steve Smith had established Gimell Records with the sole purpose of recording their work. Rather as he'd stumbled on Gibbons as a schoolboy, and set all doubts aside in the course of one chapel service, Phillips had found a performance style that, from the first, seemed right and wouldn't change.

Ten singers would stand in a semi-circle, in one row, with two voices to each part. It seems so familiar now. At the time it was a novelty, and caused a good deal of academic head-scratching. But there were practical advantages that became obvious immediately. 'The set-up on the stage was part of the discipline. It's physically being aware that there is someone standing next to you, with whom you're sharing the line, and it means



that you behave as if you're playing chamber music – listening and responding. It was new, and it caught on very nicely. Standing in one row was the key – you had singers who could see each other and react to each other. If you have two rows it is quite different, because the interplay is the point.'

Take this example of how the sound is produced: 'We stagger the breathing so that it's smooth and you get a quality in the line. In some of the music we sing there are no rests – in these cases, one voice alone would be breathing all over the line because you can't help it. With two voices you can work out how to organise the breathing.'

In other words, beauty is the thing. 'This is what we always knew, that it's a beautiful, seductive sound and the voices become an instrument that automatically produces this. The top of the sound is so beautiful, so gentle...' Phillips will talk all day like this, pondering why and how the alto voice has changed down the centuries, what kind of contemporary voices can best give life to this music, what remains to be recorded.

He's amused that no one can say that 16th-century choirs themselves sounded as the Scholars do. 'There's no evidence at all that they sang with the same discipline. None of them had singing lessons of the sort we have – possibly none at all – and they often sang to themselves in small corners of cathedrals.

perhaps 12 men and 20 boys. I suspect they sang like you and I sing. Maybe a bit better, but not much.' I let that pass.

The story of The Tallis Scholars is now part of music folklore. By the end of the '80s they'd been to Australia, the US and Japan – where they've just made their 14th visit this year – and they were earning decent professional fees. So Phillips could recruit the singers he wanted, though it was not without

'I suspect they sang like you and I sing. Maybe a bit better'

pain. 'It becomes a game of diplomacy. Do you want this person to stay with you or not? Will he co-operate or not? This went on for years. There was no lobby for it, remember. And without going into morbid detail, I've fallen out with friends. You have to keep renewing, because I have to be one or two steps ahead of the public. They know what's happening. If I were to give them a concert of the standard of five years ago, they'd spot it, and they'd say "What's going on?"

That, of course, is a definition of success. The Scholars' 40th-anniversary year included, at Easter, a performance in St Paul's Cathedral of Tallis's Spem in alium, written for eight groups of five voices, and it's a measure of the change since their foundation that a performance of Spem will not only bring an audience flocking in, almost anywhere, but will also be sung to listeners who have come to know what to expect. What was being learned 40 years ago is now accepted in the mainstream, as Phillips puts it, and he is right. They can continue with their project of recording the complete masses of Josquin on nine discs, and know that they will have listeners for whom the high Renaissance is no longer a mysterious enthusiasm, but part of the story that everyone should know.

And here is the test. The Scholars sing music by contemporary composers in whom they find those clean lines with the beauty and flexibility that the old masters taught – from Arvo Pärt to James MacMillan and Eric Whitacre. They can apply their techniques, and make them work.

'What we've learned to do, I think, is to sing with full force more or less straight – and I think that's a new technique, singing very powerfully but without distorting the sound. They didn't used to sing like that. Now so many people do, and it's often beautiful. That's good, isn't it?' ■ The Tallis Scholars' new recording on Gimell of music by John Taverner is reviewed on p70

Its quizmas time!

It may be a bleak midwinter, but don't let those moaning frosty winds get you down.

Instead, warm your brain cells up with our themed Christmas issue quiz



WATER LIKE A STONE...

- 1. 'In Freezing Winter Night' is the eighth part of which 1942 Christmas choral work for soprano/treble voices and harp?
- **2.** Which atmospherically icy work by Emile Waldteufel glided its way into ballrooms and concert halls in 1882?
- **3.** In which opera of 1902 is the eponymous character's baby drowned in the mill stream and buried under the ice by her stepmother, the 'Kostelnicka'?
- **4.** Who in 1899 reflected his country's patriotic fervour with his *The Breaking of the Ice on the Oulu River* for male choir, orchestra and narrator?
- **5.** 'Ye ice falls! Ye that from the mountain's brow...' This quotation from Coleridge's *Hymn before Sunrise, in the vale of Chamouni* was written by the composer above the third movement of which chilly 1952 symphony?

SNOW HAD FALLEN...

- **6.** If a choir includes both 'In the Bleak Midwinter' and 'The Holly and the Ivy' in its carol service, which word will it sing more often: 'Snow' or 'Sun'?
- 7. Which snowy Alexander Ostrovsky play premiered in 1873 with incidental music by Tchaikovsky later provided the basis for a likenamed opera by Rimsky-Korsakov?
- **8.** Which Austrian prodigy shot to fame when his ballet *The Snowman*, composed at the

- age of 11, was performed in front of Emperor Franz Josef at Vienna Court Opera in 1910?
- **9.** What do the animated film of Raymond Briggs's *The Snowman*, British Rail's 1980s 'Age of the Train' ad campaign and the 2011 BBC Proms performance of Havergal Brian's *Gothic* Symphony have in common?
- **10.** Which unfortunate Polish composer was killed in an avalanche in 1909?

A STABLE PLACE...

- **11.** Describing the arrival of the three wise men at the stable, 'Here is the little door' is a carol-anthem composed in 1918 by which English composer?
- **12.** Shostakovich's *Tahiti Trot* is an orchestration of which song from the 1924 musical *No, No, Nanette*?
 - **13.** Which pianist and composer wowed audiences in 1838 with his virtuosic *Grand galop chromatique*?
 - **14.** Telling the story of a man who squanders his money at the horses, the 1935 song 'Por una Cabeza' was popularised by which legendary tango singer?
- 15. How did Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Edward Elgar, Elmer Bernstein, John Williams and Paul McCartney join forces to propel rider Charlotte Dujardin and her horse Valegro to glory in August 2012?

OX AND ASS AND CAMEL...

- **16.** Which perennially popular British composer wrote *The Donkey Carol* in 1975?
- **17.** Which composer's surrealist ballet *Le boeuf sur le toit* ('The ox on the roof') was premiered at Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in February 1920?

IF I WERE A SHEPHERD...

These six composers are looking a touch sheepish. Who are they?



- **18.** Which composer began a work for children called *Das Esels Schatten* ('The donkey's shadow') in 1947, but lost interest and left it incomplete at the time of his death two years later?
- **19.** Which British composer's 1906 choral work *Omar Khayyám* features camel bells and also includes an orchestral interlude called 'Camel Caravan'?
- **20.** *The Angora Ox* is a solo piano work by which famously quirky Parisian composer?

WHAT SHALL I GIVE HIM?

- **21.** 'Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume...' To which of the kings in 'We three kings' are these lines accorded?
- **22.** Which composer incorporated the popular Shaker song 'Simple Gifts' into his 1944 ballet *Appalachian Spring*?

- **23.** Secretly installed overnight by his friends as a silver wedding present in 1892, what can still be admired at Grieg's house, Troldhaugen, to this very day?
- **24.** Which eponymous heroine spends the final Act of her 1902 opera receiving presents from admirers... but also, fatally, a bunch of poisoned violets?
- **25.** Presuming a starting date of Christmas Day itself, what does the singer of *The Twelve Days of Christmas* receive from her true love on New Year's Day?

IF I WERE A WISE MAN...

- **32.** The wise Sarastro guides who through a range of ordeals towards enlightenment? Name both the character and the opera.
- **33.** Inspired by a 1725 pedagogical text by the scholar Johann Joseph Fux, 'Dr Gradus

- ad Parnassum' is the name of the first part of which piano suite by Debussy?
- **34.** Which sage teacher advised his pupil Beethoven not to publish the last of his Op. 1 set of trios, thinking that it wouldn't go down well with players and audiences... but later admitted his error?
- **35.** Aaron Copland, Astor Piazzolla, Gian Carlo Menotti, Philip Glass, Donald Byrd and Quincy Jones are just a handful of the many notable students of which legendary French composition teacher?
- **36.** Which piano concerto was mangled by Eric Morcambe to the horror of 'Andrew Preview' on the Morecambe and Wise show in 1971?

How did you get on? Are you a Wise Man (30 or above), or are you an Ass (10 or below)? For all the answers, turn to page 102.

Ding Dong! Merrily on...who?

The carols are well known, but their composers certainly aren't. So who are the talents behind We Three Kings, Away in a Manger and all? We shed a little light

WORDS BY OLIVER CONDY, JEREMY POUND, ELIZABETH DAVIS, NEIL MCKIM

endelssohn and his Harked Herald Angels aside, the carol book is noticeably short on wellknown composers. Of the really famous carol tunes, there's Holst's setting of In the Bleak Midwinter and ... that's about it. Yet these are some of the most famous tunes ever written. Millions of people worldwide are more than familiar with the melodies to Once in Royal and Ding Dong! Merrily, which surely means their composers must be household names? Sadly not. From John Henry Hopkins Junior to Thoinot Arbeau, it's time to set the record straight. Here we take a look at the composers of 12 of our best known Christmas carol tunes. Some are wonderful, some a little weird, but all deserve to be better known.

Henry John Gauntlett 1805-76 Famous for: Once in Royal David's City



Henry John Gauntlett wasn't an easy man to like. He once wrote a letter to the precentor of Durham Cathedral criticising one of his works, enclosing an

'improved' version. He was forthright from the start: his father, the vicar at a church in Olney, had decided Henry's sisters would learn to play the organ for services. Henry, though, had other ideas and learned the instrument himself, becoming organist in 1815. In the 1830s he became interested in organ design, and patented the electric action — a mechanism which was central to an (unsuccessful) attempt to play all the organs at the 1851 Great Exhibition simultaneously. He was

respected both as an organist – he performed at the premiere of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in Birmingham Town Hall – and as a composer. In addition to 'Irby', the tune to *Once in Royal*, Gauntlett wrote over 10,000 hymns, including 'St Albinus' (*Jesus lives! thy terrors now*) and 'St Fulbert' (*Ye choirs of new Jerusalem*).

Lowell Mason 1792-1872 Famous for: Joy to the World



Given that he was a composer, it's no surprise to learn that the American Mason was an advocate for European church congregational singing. While

living in Savannah, Georgia, Mason worked at a dry goods store and was music director at the Independent Presbyterian Church where he helped establish America's first Sunday school for black children. Studies with the German composer Frederick Abel inspired him to compile a collection of hymns set to tunes by Mozart, Haydn and other European composers, published anonymously by the Boston Handel and Haydn Society. Eventually, his secret was uncovered, and his reputation as a great church music reformer was sealed. Directorship of the Boston Handel and Haydn Society was followed by several important church appointments including, in 1853, New York's Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church where, inspired by a recent tour to Germany, he disbanded the orchestra and choir and installed an organ whereupon the church soon became renowned for its fine congregational music.

John Goss 1800-80

Famous for: See, Amid the Winter's Snow



You don't have to be an expert in church music to be familiar with John Goss's work – the hymn *Praise my soul, the King of Heaven* has accompanied many

a wedding since it was written in 1869, and parish choirs still sing his simple but effective anthems. Goss's lessons with Mozart's pupil Thomas Attwood no doubt gave the composer's music its classical elegance and perhaps Goss would have been more famous had he accepted a commission in 1833 from the Royal Philharmonic Society – the same body that had asked Beethoven to compose his Ninth Symphony 11 years previously – but Goss saw his talents in ecclesiastical music. As organist at St Paul's Cathedral and, later, composer to the Chapel Royal, he wrote a steady flow of motets, psalm chants and canticles, and was knighted in 1872 for the music he wrote for a service giving thanks for the recovery of a then sickly Prince of Wales.

Robert Pearsall 1795-1856 Famous for: translating and arranging In Dulci Jubilo



It was probably parental pressure that saw Pearsall called to the bar in 1821, because just four years later, the young man fled abroad to pursue interests

in music, history, heraldry and genealogy.

Among his more curious achievements is his contribution to research in medieval torture

GETTY, TOPFOTO, BRIDGEMAN



William J Kirkpatrick 1838-1921 Famous for: Away in a Manger



William J Kirkpatrick must have been a handy person to have around at Nativity Play time – should any sets need building or, say, a manger

quickly knocking up, this Pennsylvania-born carpenter would have been the man for the job. What's more, he could write a fine tune, not least his 'Cradle Song' setting of Away in a Manger. The rapidly growing genre of Gospel music was Kirkpatrick's forte and, while his furniture-making skills sustained his lifestyle in his early years, he eventually concentrated on song writing. Teaming up with fellow composer John R Sweney in 1878, the pair went on to publish 50 collections of songs, with sales into the millions. The creative spark that brought about gospel favourites such as Lord, I'm coming home was rarely at rest. In fact, it was on the night of 20 September 1921 that Kirkpatrick hopped out of bed and made his way downstairs to jot down a tune that was racing through his head. When his wife came down the next morning, she found him slumped over his desk, dead.

Thoinot Arbeau 1519-95

Famous for:

Ding Dong! Merrily on High!



'Thoinot Arbeau' is the anagrammatic pen name of 16th-century French cleric Jehan Tabourot – with an 'i' instead of the 'j'. Born in

Dijon, Arbeau was based in north-eastern France and, *Ding Dong* aside, is best-known for *Orchésographie*, his 1588 study of early French Renaissance dance, complete with woodcuts of musicians and dance tabulations. Mentioned in this study is the 'branle' – a folk dance where the dancers move from side to side, performed by couples in a circle or a line – which Stravinsky includes in his



1957 ballet *Agon*. The tune for *Ding Dong! Merrily on High!*, meanwhile, is based on a folk tune from *Orchésographie* entitled 'Branle de l'Official'. This was set to words by the

Cornelius's Barbier de Bagdad was produced by Liszt

English composer and priest George Ratcliffe Woodward and published in *The Cambridge Carol Book: Being Fifty-Two Songs for Christmas, Easter and Other Seasons* in 1924.

Peter Cornelius 1824-74 Famous for: The Three Kings



Peter Cornelius is one of the onlookers of history. In this German composer's case, he was in the right place – Weimar, Vienna, Munich – at the right

time, and he knew all the right people, from Wagner to Hans von Bülow. And yet, for all his involvement with the New German music movement, his work has all but disappeared - only 'The Three Kings' (Die Könige) from his Weihnachtslieder is still regularly heard. Cornelius met Wagner in 1853, and when he moved to Weimar that year he was welcomed into Liszt's circle of friends. He began working as a translator and writer for the group alongside writing music. His opera Der Barbier von Bagdad was produced by Liszt in Wiemar in 1858, but its premiere was so disastrous that Cornelius had to leave the city and Liszt resigned as court conductor. Cornelius's own works - including a Stabat

Mater and a Requiem – may not be often performed, but his music influenced both Wagner and Richard Strauss.

Harold Darke 1888-1976 Famous for: In the Bleak Midwinter



There's more to Harold Darke than just his setting of *In the Bleak Midwinter* – for around a century now, choristers across the land have been subjected to

his setting of the Communion Service in F and a smattering of his other choral and organ works also get the occasional outing. But it was as an organist that Darke really excelled, earning himself a worldwide reputation. The church of St Michael's Cornhill in the City of London was his patch, and it was there that he began a series of Monday lunchtime organ recitals in 1916. Those recitals carried on until he retired some 50 years later and still continue to this day, making the series the longest-running of its kind in the world. Post-retirement, he still continued to play, and marked his 85th birthday in 1973 with a recital at London's Royal Festival Hall. His *In the Bleak Midwinter* setting is not to be confused, incidentally, with the equally popular one by Holst.

Richard Storrs Willis 1819-1900 Famous for:

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear



Richard Storrs Willis might not have made it into the pantheon of American composers, but in his role as a critic and editor, he made a large impact on

his country's music. His activities at Yale University included being a member of Skull and Bones – a secret society whose other members have included US presidents William Howard Taft, George HW Bush and George W Bush - before he went to study composition in Frankfurt and Leipzig, where he met Mendelssohn. He returned to New York in 1847 and established himself as a music critic at the New York Tribune and The Albion, then turned his hand to editing Musical World, whose strapline was 'A Weekly Journal for "Heavenly Music's Earthly Friends". He went on to write the book Our Church Music: a Book for Pastors and People which rails against populist and sentimental elements in church music. His melody 'Carol' was first published in his volume of music, Church Chorals and Choir Studies, and it has since become the standard tune for It Came Upon the Midnight Clear.

John Henry Hopkins 1820-91 Famous for: We Three Kings



John Henry Hopkins Junior was born into a family of 13. His father had emigrated to the US from Ireland in 1801 and had become an influential Bishop

in the Episcopal Church, based in Vermont. Following in his father's footsteps, JHH Junior became an Episcopal churchman. His moment in the spotlight came when he delivered the eulogy in 1885 for the funeral of 'General' Ulysses S Grant, the Civil War hero and 18th US president, but his other talents included journalism (he edited *The Church* Journal), music teaching and hymn writing. In 1863 he published a collection entitled Carols, Hymns and Songs that included his We Three Kings, a carol that had first appeared in a Christmas pageant that he organised for the Theological Seminary in New York in 1857. This is by far his best-known carol – he wrote both the words and the music – although he also composed the somewhat lesser-known 'Gather around the Christmas Tree'.

Martin Shaw 1875-1958 Famous for: Hills of the North Rejoice



If Martin Shaw had had his way, we might not be performing Bach, Beethoven and Brahms in the UK today – his service in World War I curtailed by

ill health, Shaw channelled his energies into ultra-patriotic activities that included campaigning for a ban on German music which he thought contained too much 'hysterical emotionalism'. Controversial, yes, but there was at least a positive flip-side in the form of Shaw's tireless efforts in digging out, arranging, publishing and promoting Britain's own musical heritage. Working with fellow

Rewriting the past

The art of carol arrangement

WHILE MANY OF THE carols we know and love today were composed lock, stock and barrel by brilliant tunesmiths in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, others have their roots in the distant past. Some of these origins may be sacred, some secular, but nearly all owe their current popularity to more modern composers who arranged and harmonised them so that they could be sung by choirs great and small.

Hymn collections published in the late 16th century have played a particularly notable part in shaping today's carol services. Among these is the *Piae Cantiones*, compiled by the Finn Jaakko Suomalainen in 1582 and from which we have the tunes to *Of the Father's Heart Begotten* and *Unto us a Boy is Born*, both usually sung in more recent harmonisations. Contrastingly, *Gaudete! Christus est natus* from the same collection

is often heard in its unadorned, original form. Ten years after the *Piae Cantiones*, meanwhile, came the publication of the Thomas Este's

Whole Book of Psalms and, with it, the first appearance of the 'Winchester Old' melody, in a harmonisation by composer George Kirbye (1565-1634) which we recognise today as the tune to While Shepherds Watched.

What Kirbye and his colleagues began in the 16th century, various well-known English composers carried on in the 19th. A quick browse through the hymn book reveals harmonisations of traditional English melodies by, for instance, John Stainer and Arthur Sullivan – God Rest Ye Merry and



The first Nowell (Stainer) and It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (Sullivan) in particular. And as the 20th century loomed into view, Vaughan Williams penned his 'Forest Green'

JS Bach's inventive

arrangements ensure it's

he who gets the credit

harmonisation of the tune most British congregations have come to know as *O Little* town of Bethlehem.

But no discussion of

the art of carol tune arrangement would be complete without mention of two German masters. Firstly, there's Michael Praetorius (above, 1571-1621), whom we have to thank for A Great and mighty wonder and Come, thou Redeemer. And then, of course there's JS Bach – the melodies to hymns such as Wake, O wake and How brightly shines the morning star were written by Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608), but Bach's inventive and colourful harmonisations ensure that it is he who gets all the credit!

enthusiasts including Vaughan Williams, he edited or co-edited *The English Carol Book, Songs of Praise* and *The Oxford Book of Carols,* the first of which contained the advent carol *Hills of the North Rejoice* set to his own strident melody, 'Little Cornard'. However, it was when Shaw was doing research for the English Hymnal that he made arguably his greatest mark – his discoveries included the Gaelic hymn-tune 'Bunessan', now familiar as the tune to *Morning has broken*.

Eric Boswell 1921-2009 Famous for: Little Donkey



Many of us are familiar with this carol as an integral part of school nativity plays – when a child wearing donkey ears shuffles along with Mary and

Joseph 'safely on their way' towards a stable. Its British writer, Eric Boswell, is anything

but familiar, though, and also one of the carol book's least likely composers - trained in electrical engineering and physics, he worked as a radar scientist at Marconi during World War II and became a physics lecturer. Born in Sunderland, Boswell learnt the piano and later the organ before developing a part-time interest in song composition and piano music - some of his prize-winning work was performed at London's Wigmore Hall. In 1959, he struck up a deal with music publisher Chappell where singer Gracie Fields was looking for a new song. The result was Little Donkey, which Fields took to No. 20 in the UK pop charts, while the score itself shot to No. 1 in the UK sheet music chart. Boswell continued writing songs, a couple of which almost made it to the Eurovision Song Contest, and he also became known for his Geordie comedy songs. He died just days before *Little Donkey*'s 50th anniversary.

From merry jingles at Christmas to the ominous tolling that tends to herald much darker occasions, the various sounds of bells have been represented in classical music for many centuries, as *Roderick Swanston* discovers

ells are a powerful symbol. They ring for births and weddings; they toll for deaths and funerals. Tennyson in In Memoriam (published 1850) marks the turn of a year: 'Ring out, wild bells... Ring out the old, ring in the new, /Ring, happy bells, across the snow: /The year is going, let him go; /Ring out the false, ring in the true.' More somberly John Donne meditated: 'Never send for whom the bell tolls; it

tolls for thee'. For some Christians, bells have marked significant parts of the day, and been used in church for the 'elevation of the host', as part of the Communion service. Bells ring for fire, victory and warnings. They marked for Thomas Gray in 1751 the end of the day: 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day'. In World War I soldiers used to boost their morale by singing: 'The bells of hell go tingalingaling-ling /For you and not for me.' And Wilfred Owen asked with savage irony: 'What passing bells for those that die as cattle?'

Edgar Allan Poe repeated the word 'bells' nearly 60 times in his four-stanza 1840s poem, *The Bells*, in which the sound of the bells seems to change with each occasion that they mark. Poe tried, by this repetition, to

For every sound that fleats
The six and any pointly devals
Is a people with the people
town put the people with the people
town man sound
the people with the steele
the order of the the people
the host lating, talking, talking,
and who lating, talking, talking,
and who lating, talking, talking,
and who the manglest movement,
fact a glony in a rathing
they are resident mean now corrects
they are resident mean now corrects
they are resident mean town corrects
they are resident mean town theman,
they are resident through from their souls
total the their horse it is able tells:
blood the acts, will, wills, will
the there have it is able tells:
the the mean form the tells:
the the owners from suchle
this the observations the suchle
that the owners prome suchle
this the drawest and to guilt;
thepicons time, time,
time time, time
of the bells:



BELL PULL: Rachmaninov and (left) the manuscript of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Bells*

bridge the gap between words and sounds. He even invented an onomatopoeia for the sound of bells: 'tintinnabulation'. When rung, bells are repetitive. Small patterns occur again and again, unless the pattern is altered, hence 'ringing the changes'. The repetition forms a major feature of Rachmaninov's 1913 four-movement choral symphony that sets a translation, essentially a new version, of Poe's poem. Rachmaninov's The Bells mirrors the succession of moods in Poe's poem merriment, marriage, alarms and death ('the moaning and the groaning of the bells'). In each movement a notably musical element is both the use of bells in the score, as well as their imitation on various instruments. The music employs a number of ostinato figures

like the repetitive patterns of ringing bells. But Rachmaninov, like Poe, uses the sound of bells as the starting point for wider evocations: the bells ring, but the poem and the music impose a meaning. Bells are inanimate, but what they suggest seems to give them life.

Bells, especially church bells, can be very loud, and are best heard outdoors, as at Christmas time when they ring out over an imagined snowy landscape becoming a symbolic part of the celebrations ('Ding Dong! merrily on high'). With smaller bells grand ladies used to summon their servants. and examiners commanded candidates to enter examination rooms. Schools, like sailors, mark the passage of the day by ringing bells. Shepherds in the hills keep track of their livestock with bells. Up and down the country eager groups gather to ring out tunes on handbells. The Viennese imitated, or mocked, their Ottoman enemies by using janissary bells, as in the 'jingling johnny' that appears in Mozart's Entführung aus dem Serail.

Though ringing bells generate an awesome number of overtones, each bell has one fundamental pitch, so the sound of bells can be reduced to a repeated series of pitches. It is this aspect that prompted William Byrd to compose a series of nine variations over an ostinato bass of two notes (C and D) called *The Bells*. Starting over a rocking triple-time bass, each variation contains further variations within it, mostly made of short-lived canons, but like the sound of bells themselves a sort of



mesmeric fascination creeps in. By the second variation the opening bass line, the C/D ostinato, has been transferred to the top part and turned upside. From the opening notes Byrd generates a wide variety of scales, which gradually get faster by subdividing the beat. By the end of the eighth variation a series of counter-melodies have tried to wrest the music away from the obsessive tolling of the bell figure; but they lose as this C/D repetition persists to the end as the momentum of the music calms. While it would be fanciful to suggest that Byrd intended his piece to be more than just a pretext on which to build a clever series of pattern variations, it is hard not to imagine that what happens in the music was suggested by the hypnotic ringing of bells and the counter-melodies that appear from the concatenation of overtones.

Variations based on repeated bell tones have cropped up over many centuries, as has the inspiration derived from the spellbinding effect they can have. One of the most famous is Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* recorded in 1972-3. Lasting nearly 50 minutes and originally occupying two sides of an LP, this very popular and influential work attracted attention far beyond its 'pop' origins. While it was only eventually entitled *Tubular Bells*, the

work goes far beyond Byrd's imitative technique, not least in the range of instruments used. But it resembles Byrd by starting with a bell-inspired idea and following where fancy takes the imagination

Some works have been nicknamed 'The Bell', often

Bells are inanimate, but what they suggest seems to give them life

not by their composers, but by others who imagined the repetitive use of a melodic pattern seemed like a peal of bells. Two such works are Purcell's so-called 'Bell Anthem', a verse anthem whose real title is *Rejoice in the Lord Alway* (1683-4), and Khachaturian's Second Symphony. The soubriquet is not a good guide to Purcell's anthem as it only refers the opening prelude, which uses a descending scale of C major. A fanciful editor was clearly keen on descriptive

titles. The nickname 'Symphony with a bell' fits Khachaturian's Symphony No. 2 much better, even though the composer denied any intention for the Symphony to express anything outside itself. The description was

attached by the Russian critic Georgy Khubov in 1946 three years after the work was composed. But it is justified by the number of bell references in the score: a bell sounds in the opening chords of the first movement, which uses a motto figure, F-D-D-B resembling the pitches of tolling bells. Bell-like figures occur elsewhere in the work, such as the beginning of the second movement. The Symphony, composed in 1943, evokes the tragedy enveloping Russia at that stage of World War II, despite Khachaturian's supposed abstract intentions.

NA PHILHARMONIC KHACHATURIAN

Bells crop up in many musical scores. Mozart uses magic bells to protect Tamino and Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* (1791). A bell striking midnight marks the beginning of Max's dealings with the devil in the Wolf's Glen in Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821).

MUSIC WITH A PEAL

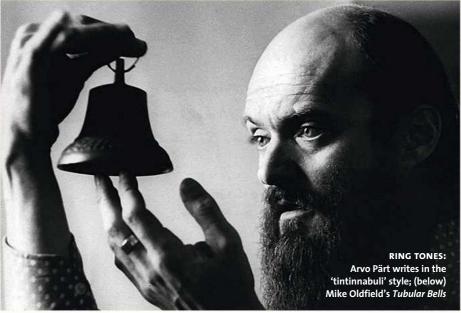
Works written specifically for bells



THE MOST OBVIOUS MUSIC 'written' for bells are the chimes that peal from church towers where bells are rung in varying sequences, some taking many hours to perform. Each of these sequences has acquired names such as 'Plain Bob Doubles', 'Grandsire Doubles' or 'Plain Hunt'. And the bells themselves often have names, such as Big Ben. Big Ben chimes four notes: G sharp, F sharp, E and B which is said to have been based on Handel's 'I know that my redeemer liveth' from Messiah. Groups playing handbells began at the end of the 17th-century, initially to practise in private what they rang on larger bells in public. But in time they acquired independence and music was composed or arranged for them. Apart from multiple arrangements of hymns and famous songs there are a number of compositions for handbells, such as the Handbell Symphony (1989) by the Estonian composer Peeter Vähi.

For the most part bells have been used in Western music as part of an ensemble. But in 1980 Jonathan Harvey was commissioned by Paris's Pompidou Centre to compose *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco*, in which the sound of the tenor bell in Winchester Cathedral and his son's treble voice are electronically modified, proceeding from big bells at the start to smaller ones at the end.

Wagner uses bells in *Parsifal* to mark the entrance to Montsalvat by Parsifal and Gurnemanz.
Britten intersperses the distant boys' choir with a chiming, perhaps tolling, bell in his *War Requiem* (1962). Arvo Pärt, perhaps echoing this, uses a similarly expressive bell in his lament *Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten* (1977). His style is often referred to with Poe's invented word, tintinnabuli, suggesting a much wider use of bell-inspired music than just using the sound of a bell in his *Cantus*.



Russian operas abound in bells, often in celebration of a tsar's coronation. Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* ends with a peal, and Musorgsky's Boris Godunov is crowned to the sound of bells. Musorgsky's bell sounds are among the most original in music, as before the actual sound of bells in the score, the orchestra suggests their ringing with a

In Mahler, bells often represent escape from the turmoil of life

series of dissonances swinging through the orchestra from low to high. His use of a short ostinato figure that accompanies these chords is also reminiscent of gamelan music, another widespread use of bells in music in the Far East.

Liszt's Les cloches de Genève first appeared in his 1830s Album d'un Voyageur but re-appeared in an altered form in the first volume of his Années de pèlerinage published in 1855. In its first appearance Les cloches had a quotation from 'Canto III/LXXII' of Lord Byron's Childe

Harold's Pilgrimage superscribed: 'I live not in myself, but I become /Portion of that around me'. Byron expresses what French dramatist Romain Rolland and psychologist Sigmund Freud later described as an oceanic feeling: a sense of being one with one's external world. The bells trigger this experience. Liszt starts with short descending phrases representing

the sound of bells heard in the distance over the lake. But by transferring this figure into the accompaniment Liszt makes it the background to his self-reflection, conveyed in the piano piece by the ascending melody in the treble. His bells act like the madeleine biscuits in Proust's *A la recherche du temps* perdu (In Search of Lost Time).

Just as in Byrd's Bells, the mildly dissonant left hand in the Liszt remains static while the right hand follows his stream of consciousness. Gradually this stream is varied and intensified as the opening bells are almost lost in the reverie and self-absorption. But suddenly as the amount of chromaticism intensifies the bells return alone with a repeated E flat. This causes the music to change direction as the music moves to D major and a kind of contented undulation seems to bring peace to replace the anguish. But the bell-like repeated note finally effects a change of mood from reflection to determination as a dramatic climax is reached before the music dissolves in a sea of cascading arabesques. Finally Liszt's consciousness returns to the source of his interior monologue, the ringing bell. Later on, bells as a prompt for inner reflection occur in Mahler symphonies where they, or their imitations, often represent peace and escape from the turmoil of life, such as in the 'cowbell' passage in the first movement of his Sixth Symphony.

Christmas is filled with bells. Some jingle, some go ding dong. In 1863 the American poet Longfellow heard them ringing on Christmas Day, and maybe too optimistically wrote: 'Then pealed the bells more loud and deep... /The Wrong shall fail, /The Right prevail, /With peace on earth, good-will to men.' Let's hope so.





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Dream teams

If you could choose any musicians to play together for you on Christmas Day, who would it be? Today's leading players reveal their chamber music fantasies

..... ILLUSTRATION JONTY CLARK

ON CHRISTMAS MORNING, 1870, Cosima Wagner awoke to the first ever performance of the *Siegfried Idyll*, a piece her husband had written to celebrate her birthday and their recent wedding. How charming! And this got us thinking: if we could be woken on Christmas morning by a chamber group – from any period of history – who would be in it, and what would they play? How about, say, Rachmaninov being joined by Paganini and Jacqueline du Pré (right) for his own Piano Trios? The possibilities are endless, so we asked top musicians of today to have a go...

ALBAN GERHARDT cellist

I'd like to be woken up by the slow movement of the Debussy String Quartet. A couple of years ago, when my mother knew she was dying, she asked for this to be played. It's very heavenly and transcendental so that would be my Christmas morning choice. I love hearing music played by composers because they have a completely different insight. So as first violinist I'd have Eugène Ysaÿe and as second violinist we'd have his colleague George Enescu. Both were brilliant composers - I've recorded works by them both. One composer who played the viola well was Paul Hindemith. And not only was he a fantastic composer but he reveals a strong sense of humour in his music, so I think he would get along with Ysaÿe and Enescu quite well. There are not many great composing cellists, but David Popper was very good at both and he also taught so many important cellists. Obviously I'm choosing out of selfishness because I'd love to meet all these four players.

MENAHEM PRESSLER pianist Ideally, I'd like to be playing in a quintet with some of my favourite players – we could play a quintet by Brahms, Dvořák, Schumann or even **Dohnányi**! The two violinists in my dream ensemble would include Daniel Hope, my violinist from the Beaux Arts Trio, or possibly the fantastic Maxim Vengerov, Leonidas Kavakos or Joshua Bell, who studied with me as a little boy. For my cellist, I'd wish that Bernard Greenhouse was still around, or go for Antonio Meneses or Paul Watkins, the new cellist with the Emerson Quartet who is simply too good to be true. And on viola, I think Lawrence Power would be wonderful, as would Larry Dutton or Paul Coletti. If I had to let someone else play the piano, I'd want one of Radu Lupu, Murray Perahia, Emanuel Ax or, from the younger generation, Daniil Trifonov. I have never heard Trifonov in chamber music, but when someone plays as sensitively as he does and plays with the right people, I'm sure he'd do it well.

MICHAEL COLLINS clarinettist

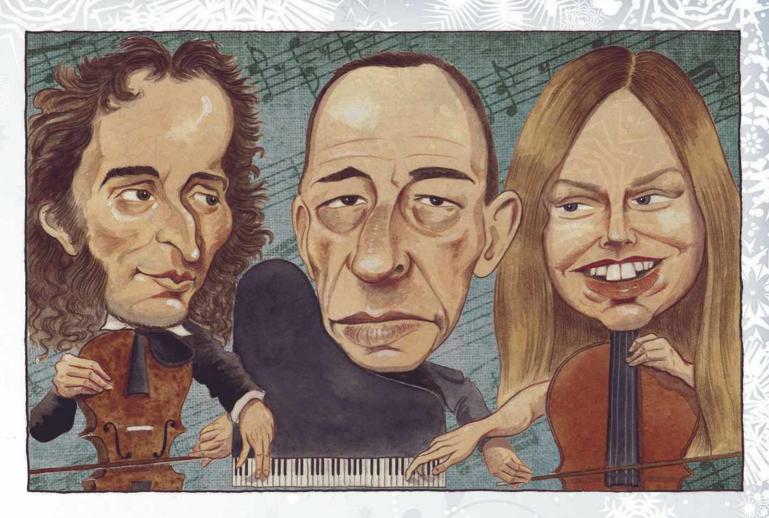
As a student, my clarinet teacher was Thea King and she suggested that I go and have lessons with someone who wasn't a clarinet player. So I went to Jacqueline du Pré. She knew nothing about the clarinet but she was a fabulous musician. I learnt so much from just listening to her talk about the long line which,

as wind players, we're very bad about. String players, of course, don't have to breathe, but the thing I learnt from her is that it doesn't matter about breathing: think about the phrase. Because it was very late in her life, I never had the opportunity to hear her play. We worked on Brahms's clarinet works – I'm very passionate about Brahms's clarinet music and I love Brahms's chamber music anyway, so I've often thought how wonderful it would be to hear her and Daniel Barenboim playing *Brahms*'s *Cello Sonatas*, which I adore.

SARA MOHR-PIETSCH

Radio 3 presenter

I think the *Haydn Sunrise Quartet* would be a fantastic piece to wake up to – it eases you in gently with that wonderful soaring violin. So it needs a violinist who doesn't shy away from the note but can spin these delicate threads – and for me Jascha Heifetz has that wonderful delicacy of tone. The second violin would be Sibelius because towards the end of his life he wrote that he had a dream in which he was a professional violinist and I imagine him waking up rather sad from that – so he gets to join this ensemble. My viola player would be Mozart, to bring some liveliness to



my Christmas morning. And I'd really like to meet him – I'm assuming I get to have breakfast with them afterwards. Finally, Paul Tortelier playing the cello, because his rich tone just does it for me. I have absolutely no idea how that would work as a quartet – there might be a few language barriers – but there's a nice balance in having two star soloists on the outside and two composers doing the important work in the middle.

LAWRENCE POWER viola player If I woke up to hear the slow movement of the Mozart D major String Quintet, I would be very happy as it's one of my all-time favourite pieces of music. If I had a time machine to put certain people together, I'd have to build my group around Mozart, on second viola. On first viola I'd put my favourite violist, William Primrose. Strategically that would be quite good - if Mozart heard Primrose play he might even write a viola concerto, which would be a wonderful thing! On second violin I'd have the Polish violinist Josef Hassid, who died at just 27. He was wonderful and would have gone to be a really influential player, I think. On first violin I'd have Paganini. I've no idea how he would sound, which is why I'm curious to have him there. Paul Tortelier would be fun to have around on Christmas

morning, and he'd probably get on well with Mozart. And he's one of my favourite cellists. That would be my rather eclectic line-up.

EDWARD DUSINBERRE violinist My dream quartet would consist of the violinists Ginette Neveu and Ida Haendel, Lionel Tertis on viola and Jacqueline du Pré playing the cello. I'd like to hear them play the slow movements of *Beethoven*'s *Op. 127*

'I'm assuming I get to have breakfast with them afterwards...'

and *Op. 132 Quartets*. Haendel's recording of Sibelius was the first recording that made me excited about violin-playing, while I listened to Neveu a lot as a teenager – they both have an extraordinary personal style, and it would be really cool to hear them bring that individuality to this repertoire. I'd also like to hear du Pré play that beautiful rising cello line that comes through early on in Op. 127, and I always think of Tertis being in this wonderful tradition of warm, gorgeous viola playing.

That said, I'd be very amused to hear them all match their vibrato... I like the gender make-up of this quartet – exactly the opposite of ours in the Takács Quartet – but must admit that part of the interest would be to see how they all got on in a room together!

VIKTORIA MULLOVA violinist

Right now I'm obsessed with Brazilian music. There are so many incredible musicians but one of my favourite singers is Ana Carolina - actually, she has such a low voice, for a few years I thought it was a man singing! I'd have the jazz pianist Herbie Hancock performing with her. He did an album called Possibilities with lots of different pop singers like Sting, Annie Lennox, Joss Stone and Paul Simon, so it would be amazing for him to perform Brazilian songs with Carolina as Brazilian music is very influenced by jazz. I've chosen them because I like it when people do music that's not crossover but fusion, where they make something new in music - not jazz, not classical, not pop. I don't know if they have met each other but I think they'd be great together. That would be my dream.

Now it's your turn: who would be your chamber music dream team? We'd like to know. Email us at music@classical-music.com

MUSICAL DESTINATIONS

A GRAND OLD CITY OF MUSIC

York: England

From the towering Minster to dark corners of cosy pubs, few cities can match York for both the variety and history of its music-making, as local resident *Rob Ainsley* reports

York is not short of famous images: the Minster, the Shambles, museums, or olde shoppes... To those, we locals might add flooded riverside paths and raucous hen parties. But music? Lacking a major hall or headline orchestra, York might be mistaken for a lightweight. Is it heck.

'York is one of the most musical cities in the country,' says Delma Tomlin, director of the city's National Centre for Early Music (NCEM), 'with lots of professional, but also enormous amateur, music-making, especially choirs.' Concerts abound here, particularly pre-Christmas, and the buzz for the visitor, says Tomlin, is hearing Lassus or Ligeti in such atmospheric settings, 'often an

intimate, beautiful medieval church down an alley. The surroundings are a vital part of the experience.' The centre's York Early Music Christmas Festival started in 1997, since when, Tomlin points out, the value of heating, mince pies and mulled wine has become apparent in winning and retaining audiences – not such an issue in July, of course, when NCEM's annual York Early Music Festival also draws national audiences.

While York's architecture is largely ancient, its musical ethos unites ancient and

'Music is part of York's history, from churches to green spaces'

modern, as the concert flyers festooning the Tourist Information's music section demonstrate. This is not least due to the influence of the University of York. 'Standards of music-making are very high at the university, with two main areas of renown, early and contemporary,' says Peter Seymour, professor of music. The department's Lyons Hall, a short bike ride from the city is, in turn, the venue for many of York's high-profile orchestral concerts.

It was back in 1979 that Seymour formed the internationally successful Yorkshire Bach Choir, which performs in St Michael le Belfrey, facing the Minster. 'It holds 650 people, and its flat ceiling has a good acoustic and good sightlines,' he says. 'People like York's bohemian setting and informality – audiences can rub shoulders with artists.

Promoters see the value of high standards but also thoughtful performance values.'

The mighty Minster itself dominates York's skyline (and often soundscape, when the bell-ringers do their glorious stuff). Nearby, I chat over a pint to Paul Gameson in one of York's reputed 365 pubs (actually 200-ish, but still quite enough for a year). He's one of the Minster choir's full-time 'songmen', performing eight services a week. 'It's a stunning place to work,' he enthuses. 'Acoustically it's very different from other cathedrals — visiting choirs are surprised how much effort it takes to fill the space.' He relishes the mix of repertoire. 'We just did some Tomkins and Howells today', he says. 'That mix of old and new is characteristic.'

Semi-professional and professional singers come to York because of the opportunities, and many students stay on to make careers here – Gameson being an example. He

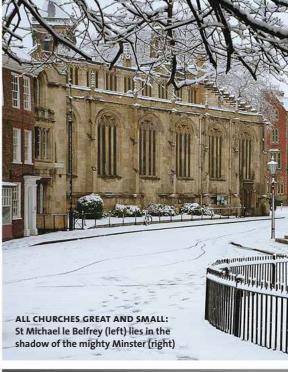
LOCAL HERO

John Barry



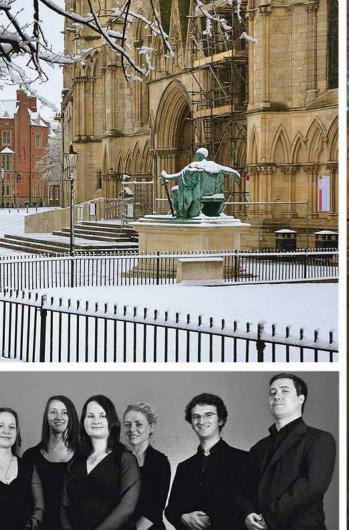
York's most famous musical son, Barry took lessons briefly with Minster organist Francis Jackson before becoming the great film composer and arranger of the 1960s,

known for bold, lush orchestrations and earworm melodies. Monty Norman got the legal credit for the 'James Bond Theme', but Barry got the commissions: almost a dozen more Bond scores followed, including From Russia with Love, Goldfinger, You Only Live Twice, and Diamonds are Forever. Think 1960s TV themes, and the Barry sound probably comes to mind. He received five Oscars, and an honorary doctorate from the University of York in 2001.





TTY, ALAMY, K. MIURA





also directs a choir, The Ebor Singers, one of around 20 regularly performing choral ensembles in the city. (York Musical Society is the oldest in England.)

Add eight or so orchestras of pros, semipros and amateurs, all with their own seasons; vast community projects such as the four-yearly Mystery Plays; unheralded gems such as the thriving Guitar Society... music is everywhere. For example, on Monday nights in the Snickleway Inn down medieval Goodramgate, the York Philharmonic Choir liven up their post-rehearsal refreshment with some impromptu vocal performances.

York's a musically sociable place today, and has been for centuries. 'York's history is visible everywhere,' says Gameson, 'and the music is part of that history, from the churches to the green spaces in between.'

And the pubs, of course. Just watch out for those hen parties. ■

YORK 5 MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

York Early Music Christmas Festival

Violinist Rachel Podger (right) and her Brecon Baroque ensemble, The Sixteen and the Yorkshire Bach Choir are just a few of the leading performers at this year's festival, which runs from 6-15 December.

ncem.co.uk



As well as its annual service of nine lessons and carols on

Christmas Eve, the choir also gives two carol concerts this year, on 5 and 6 December, plus a performance of Handel's *Messiah* on 14 December, where soloists will include soprano Sarah Fox, countertenor lestyn Davies and tenor Andrew Kennedy.

yorkminster.org

York Early Music Festival

York isn't just for Christmas. Every July, this acclaimed festival celebrates all things ancient in a variety of settings. ncem.co.uk

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From big ticket cast-of-hundreds projects, to community choirs in a church hall, music making always goes on somewhere. Pick up a leaflet from Tourist Information, or look out for posters on churches or pubs.



COMPOSER OF THE MONTH

JOHN WILLIAMS

Multi-faceted movie great

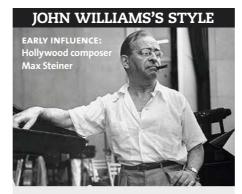
A rare combination of creative imagination, wide-ranging knowledge and sheer adaptability has made John Williams the most successful film composer of all time, says *John Riley*

Ilm music often has to make its points immediately, and two of John Williams's best-loved scores feature, respectively, unforgettable five- and two-note themes. But, for all the instant recognisability of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Jaws*, there's a lot more to Williams than just that. With hundreds of films and television episodes written over more than half a century, there's little that he hasn't tackled in terms of style, genre or tone of voice.

Some of cinema's most successful franchises, including *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, *Superman* and *Harry Potter*, are inconceivable without his music. But outside these fantasy scores, he is equally adept at dramas and even comedies, and some of his non-film works have an avant-gardism that can seem surprising. He is, however, at his best in sweeping, unbuttoned Americana that has an immediacy and confidence filled with easy melody.

When he picked up the Oscar for *Schindler's List* in 1994, it was his fifth statuette, following successes for his arrangements in *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971), and the original scores for *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars* (1977) and *ET* (1982). To date he has been nominated almost 50 times (second only to Walt Disney) and has won a host of other awards including over 20 Grammys – in many years two of his scores have even competed against each other.

His body of film work is impressive enough, but he has also written a large amount of concert music, including 15 concertos and a symphony, written with the encouragement of Bernard Herrmann and premiered by his long-standing advocate André Previn: all three men moved between the film studio and the concert hall. His bassoon concerto, *Five Sacred Trees*, escapes the instrument's clownish persona with something grittier than the benign sounds of some of his most popular



Americana

The Reivers (1969) and The Sugarland Express (1974) use instruments like the banjo, harmonica and Jew's harp, and include hoedowns and other popular dance forms. These are set against Copland-esque evocations of wide American landscapes.

Classic film scores

Williams started out at the end of the 'Golden Age' of Hollywood film music, with revered composers such as Alfred Newman, Max Steiner and Dimitri Tiomkin. Though the 1960s would see the rise of pop-song scores, Williams kept faith with the orchestra and in 1977 *Star Wars* helped re-establish it, paving the way for many of today's film composers.

Melodies and themes

While he writes fantastic melodies, much of Williams's work employs *leitmotifs*, smaller cells associated with characters or ideas that are manipulated and developed over the film, in a way akin to Wagner's operas.

Avant-garde

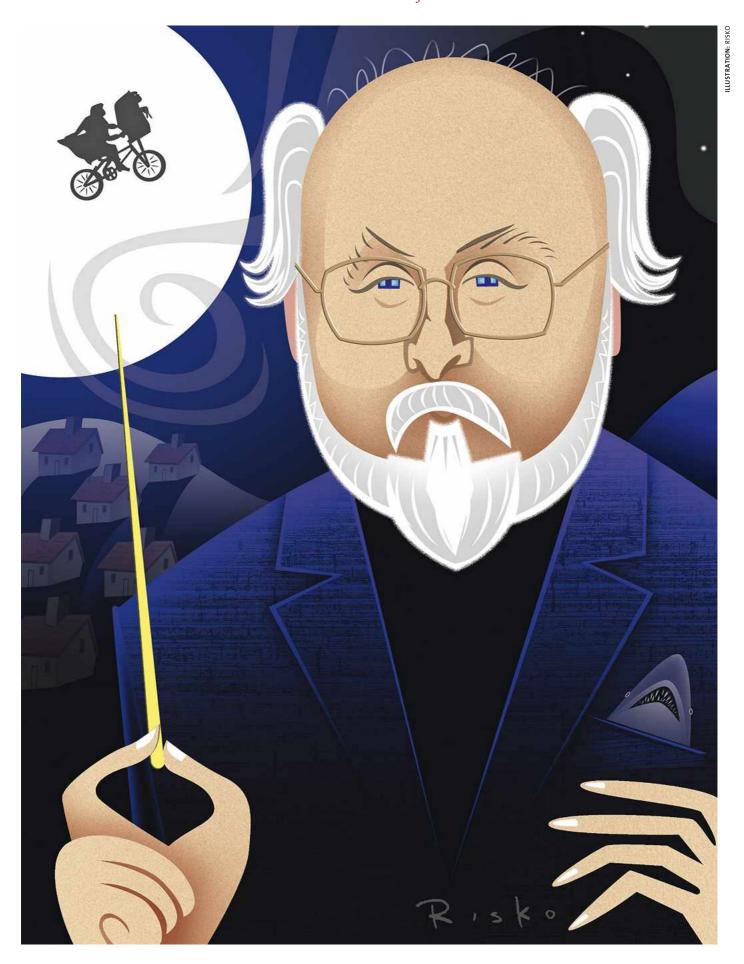
While his fantasy and popular scores are filled with rich melodies, he is interested in the avant-garde. His rhythmic, melodic, harmonic and orchestral effects and occasional electronics add an edge to some scores, pulling them back from sentimentality.

film work. But he does not see the concert hall as allowing the freedom that the studio denies. Indeed, the money that comes from a major studio can allow some extraordinary sonic experimentation. 'Film music,' he has observed, 'can also bring out the best in us, if we give it the best of us and don't approach it like a musical step-child.' 'Classical' performers who have happily taken up Williams's work include conductors Leonard Slatkin, Seiji Ozawa, Christoph von Dohnányi and Kurt Masur, soprano Kathleen Battle, violinists Itzhak Perlman and Gil Shaham, cellists Yo-Yo Ma and Lynn Harrell, and the Chicago Symphony's principal horn Dale Clevenger, while for many years Williams himself has conducted the Boston Pops Orchestra.

His numerous, often patriotic, occasional pieces include Olympic fanfares and celebrations of Columbus's arrival in America, the Statue of Liberty, Texas's declaration of independence, the New York Philharmonic's 150th anniversary, Leonard Bernstein's 70th birthday and Prince Philip's trip to Boston. For Barack Obama's first inauguration, he wrote a set of variations on *Simple Gifts*, famously used by Copland in *Appalachian Spring*.

Johnny Williams Snr was a jazz percussionist and his son not only took his name (some of his closest collaborators still call him Johnny), but also followed him into the film studio as a pianist. As well as working for film greats such as Alfred Newman and Max Steiner, his piano playing appeared in dozens of films such as Porgy and Bess, Some Like It Hot, West Side Story and To Kill a Mockingbird. This mixture of influences – jazz and popular music, the core classical repertoire and the great symphonic film scores – helped formulate Williams's style. He even hammered out the opening riff of Henry Mancini's theme for TV's popular private eye Peter Gunn (1958-61). Meanwhile

CETTY



LIFE&TIMES

A quick guide to the main events in the life of John Williams

THE LIFE

1932

THE TIMES



John Towner Williams Jr is born on 8 February in QUEENS, NEW YORK. The son of a jazz percussionist, he becomes a pianist and leads his own jazz band.

1952

After studying at the University of California, he is drafted into the US Air Force where he conducts for the first time. He enters the Juilliard School and works as a jazz pianist in New York.

1956

In Hollywood he makes a name as an arranger and composer, and he records with ANDRÉ PREVIN.

1974

He works with director Steven Spielberg on The Sugarland Express, followed by Jaws (1975).

1977

Spielberg introduces Williams to director George Lucas. Star Wars becomes the bestselling score-only soundtrack of all time.

1980

Williams replaces Arthur Fiedler as principal conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra, and stays in the position for 13 years.

1994

SCHINDERS IST

He enjoys double success with scores to Jurassic Park and SCHINDLER'S LIST,

> the latter of which wins him his fifth Oscar.

He scores Memoirs of a Geisha. Less prolific as a film composer, he continues to conduct many orchestras, including the

1932

New York Governor FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT

defeats Republican Herbert Hoover to become the 32nd President of the United States in a landslide victory. Uniquely, he goes on to serve four terms.

The Japanese launch a surprise air attack on the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, ending the US's policy of isolationism and bringing it into World War II.

1955

Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat to a white man while riding on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott and what is considered by many as the beginning of the modern Civil Rights Movement.

1969

Depicting the seedier side of New York, MIDNIGHT COWBOY, directed by John Schlesinger and starring Jon Voight and Dustin Hoffmann, wins the Oscar for Best Picture.

1984

At the Summer

record of four gold medals, in the 100m, 200m, long jump and 4 x 100m relay.

Thirty-six years after becoming the first American to orbit the Earth, JOHN GLENN becomes the oldest man to go into space when, aged 77, he goes on a mission on the space shuttle Discovery.

2005

2013

Hurricane Katrina strikes the southern US coast, resulting in the deaths of over 1,800 people. Particularly hard hit is New Orleans, where the levee fails.

he led his own jazz ensemble, and his score for the comedy heist *How to Steal a Million* (1966) captures the balance of tension and levity. More traditional was the music for a 1970 US TV Jane Eyre, where Williams had a chance to visit the Brontes' home in preparation for writing a mini piano concerto in English pastoral style.

In 1974 Williams met a slightly awkward young man who was about to direct his first feature. Directors are not always musically literate, but Steven Spielberg's knowledge of Williams's catalogue so impressed the composer that he agreed to score his heistchase The Sugarland Express. Thus began his most important cinematic collaboration during which he has scored all of Spielberg's films except The Color Purple. Williams placed The Sugarland Express geographically, using bluegrass, adding a folky guitar and harmonica theme (Belgian jazz great Toots Thielemans obliged), which also appears in versions for string orchestra, and a cool, slightly dirty jazz ensemble.

The next year, their collaboration moved to another level. Jaws's two-note motif has become as iconic as Bernard Herrmann's music for Psycho's shower scene. Starting pianissimo, it draws us into the screen and the ocean's depths before it races terrifyingly forward to attack. But ironically, in the 1960s and '70s, the jazz and pop influences that Williams had helped introduce were beginning to overwhelm traditional orchestral film scores, especially as pop-filled 'soundtrack' albums became a useful source of income. It was left to Williams to push back.

Spielberg suggested to his friend George Lucas that Williams should score his lowbudget film Star Wars. Little was expected of the film, but rather than cut the music budget, Williams and Lucas chose to go for a full orchestral Romantic score in the tradition of Korngold's music for Errol Flynn swashbucklers – it was entirely fitting for a film inspired by 1930s serials like Flash Gordon. He recorded the score with the London Symphony Orchestra, beginning a regular collaboration, embracing Star Wars, Indiana Jones, Superman and Harry Potter.

But Star Wars was a difficult production: many thought this 'children's fantasy' would disappear quickly and Williams expected it to be no more notable in his catalogue than any other film. Even Lucas was disappointed with much of the finished film, but he later said the music was one of the few things that had initially exceeded his expectations.

Williams had scored a number of episodes of TV's Lost in Space, and for Star Wars he created a space opera with Wagnerian leitmotifs and big



Olympics in Los

Angeles, Carl Lewis equals Jesse Owens's





New York Philharmonic.





set-pieces. He didn't know that Lucas was planning a series of films but this approach proved perfect as he was able to develop that basic material to bind together what became six films and track the progress of the narrative and the characters. The popularity of the film and its music changed the face of film music, reintroducing the idea of the orchestral score and allowing other composers to argue their cause.

Today, Williams works in a unique fashion. To avoid pre-visualising the film or anticipating the tempo of scenes, he doesn't read scripts or source materials. But he does sometimes write initial general cues based on what he does know; in 1977 Spielberg used those to help structure the alien adventure film Close Encounters of the Third Kind. For the crucial five-note communication motif, Williams wrote around 350 combinations. The octave drop and final fifth (intervals that pervade the score) seem timeless, while that last interval, rather than an end, is like an ellipsis, full of potential.

For Indiana Jones he again wrote a number of potential main themes, but although they were winnowed down to two candidates, Spielberg was unable to choose, so Williams bound them together in his music. In this massive score – it runs almost continuously through the film - Williams again showed his mastery of tone. The Nazis' music is aggressive in a traditional 1940s style but slightly camp, in keeping with the comedy-fantasy tone, yet it never reduces the threat too far by becoming comic. And it is apt to suddenly change, with the music playing a crucial role: at the end it embraces the beautiful spirits emerging from the Ark before their horrifying transition.

Perhaps Williams's early prolific work on

an ever-changing rota of projects helped him to employ various styles in different films at the same time – in the early 1970s some of his great successes were disaster movies such as The Poseiden Adventure (1972) and Towering Inferno (1974). Yet at the same time as writing these dense, exciting and melodic orchestral scores he worked on *Images*, Robert Altman's drama about mental breakdown - the stripped-down textures include a sweet Spanish guitar and a glockenspiel, with strange crashes

For Star Wars he created a space opera with Wagnerian leitmotifs

from Japanese percussionist Stomu Yamashta. Thirty years later Williams introduced a whole range of Japanese instruments, including the 13-stringed koto and the shakuhachi flute, into Memoirs of a Geisha (2005). Counterpointing these are Yo-Yo Ma's solo cello, giving the heroine her voice, while the president is portrayed by Itzhak Perlman's tender violin.

Similarly, in 1993 Spielberg and Williams simultaneously worked on two dizzyingly different projects, somehow keeping them separate. For the dinosaur-cloning fantasy Jurassic Park, Williams wrote a wonderfully optimistic, striding main theme, which is overtaken by the darker, more violent music as things go predictably wrong. At the same time they were making the film that would overturn Spielberg's reputation as popcorn merchant: the Holocaust drama Schindler's List. For this, Williams studied Russian Jewish shtetl music, writing a violin concertino (played by Itzhak Perlman) that was understatedly

melancholic, drawing us into the film by leaving us to contemplate the horror. Schindler's List opened the way for Spielberg's more serious work for which Williams wrote darker, more contemplative scores, notably in the turbid morality of Munich (2005) and the Coplandesque Lincoln (2012). His dissonant music helps the viewer navigate the complex of flashbacks and forwards in Oliver Stone's Nixon (1995).

At 80, Williams is slowing down to 'only' around one film a year. Those popular franchises - with their immense scores continue, and he is slated to score upcoming Star Wars and Indiana Jones films. But it's equally possible that he'll work, barely announced, on a smaller scale project like the wartime family drama The Book Thief, whose music he has just completed. Whatever comes next, his legacy - whether it's the two notes of Jaws, the five notes of Close Encounters or much beyond – is assured. ■

BBG RADIO



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JOHN WILLIAMS

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS



Star Wars LSO/John Williams Sony S2K92950 (2 discs) £12.99 Williams leads the LSO in the best-selling film score album ever, in classic 'Golden Age of Hollywood' style.



Close Encounters of the Third Kind Arista 07822 19004-2 (Download at iTunes.com) One of Williams's favourites. as well as the famous fivenote motif, there are Ligetiesque clouds of sound.



Memoirs of a Geisha Yo-Yo Ma (cello) etc /John Williams Sony 82876 77857 2 (See prestoclassical.co.uk) An understated character study featuring a range of Japanese instruments.



Yo-Yo Ma Plays the Music of John Williams Sony SK 89670

(Download at iTunes.com) One of Williams's closest collaborators in non-film works ranging from richly melodic to impressionistic.

BUILDING A LIBRARY

MESSIAH George Frideric Handel

As the annual juggernaut of performances of Handel's masterpiece rolls into view, *Berta Joncus* names the recordings that should have everyone shouting 'Hallelujah!'

Performances of Handel's Messiah are now a public ritual, yet our annual sing-ins and choral society performances misrepresent the work. Conceived at a career low, Messiah was successfully test-run in Dublin, but in London fell foul of the church's ban on performing Biblical verses in a theatre. Handel got around this by making Messiah a feature of his Lenten charity benefit concerts. These became a seasonal ritual for leading citizens, not least because of the new music Handel would introduce for his star soloists. Following the 1784 Handel Commemoration at Westminster Abbey, the score of Messiah became fixed, and performing forces huge. Re-scored by Mozart and others, post-1780 versions dropped star-specific solos, obscured Handel's counterpoint, and slowed his ebullient dance rhythms. Artists tackling Messiah today therefore face the challenge both of getting to grips with Handel's different versions – and of meeting expectations set up by misinformed past practice.



CHOICE HANDEL MESSIAH

Stephen Layton (conductor) Allan Clayton, lestyn Davies, Polyphony; Britten Sinfonia (2009) Hyperion CDA67800 £12.99

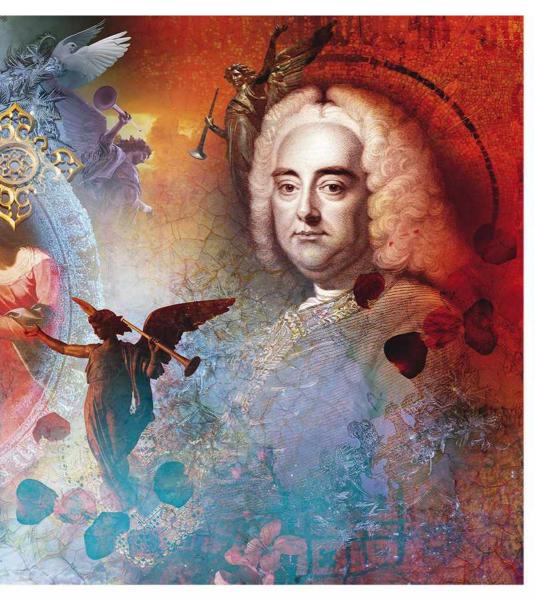
THE BEST RECORDING STEPHEN LAYTON

STEPHEN LAYTON'S MUSICIANS bring an unparalleled freshness to this familiar work, combining power with a delicacy faithful to Handel's Baroque sensibility. The music Handel composed for *Messiah* is meant to convince audiences of a vision beyond religious factionalism, and Layton rightly shapes his reading around the oratorio's verses. Every phrase, whether played or sung, is suffused with word-meaning. Momentum builds throughout the work, thanks to the excellent musicianship of choir, conductor, instrumentalists and soloists alike. The choir's responsiveness, the Britten Sinfonia's airy ensemble,

CHOSEN ONE: Stephen Layton's *Messiah* rises above the rest

the fluidity of Layton's tempos and the musical imagination of the soloists deftly nuance a score forged from *Messiah*'s 1750 version and some later variants. Modern instruments are made to sound like period instruments, with the players adopting a Baroque clarity, nimbleness and ingenuity of extemporisation. Gorgeous instrumental solos abound. Violinist Jacqueline Shave's *obbligato* lines are particularly delightful, delivered with such sweet vulnerability to make the same passages on rival discs seem clunky. Similarly, while larger than the choirs Handel directed, Polyphony retains the transparency needed to portray Handel's

elaborate counterpoint, which culminates in the final 'Amen'. This *Messiah* not only captures the heart, but ravishes the ear.







Building a Library is broadcast on BBC Radio 3 at 9.30am each Saturday as part of *CD Review*. A highlights podcast is available at www.bbc.co.uk/radio3

recording of Handel's very first Messiah (from Dublin in 1742). The skeleton forces of just 13 vocalists and a neat 17-member band facilitate a nimbleness and responsiveness unique among Messiah recordings, and indeed, the choruses are surprisingly robust. Highly original are both the continuo realisation (with John Butt at the harpsichord) and the 'Pifa' or 'Pastoral Symphony' section's dreamy atmosphere. The vocal ensemble deftly teases out Messiah's various moods, and they possess an impressive freshness throughout the recording, although it has to be said that the soloists sometimes disappoint.



William Christie (conductor) Barbara Schlick, Sandrine Piau, Andreas Scholl, Mark Padmore, Nathan Berg; Les Arts Florissants (1994)

Harmonia Mundi HMG 501498.99 £14.99 For quality of soloists, this disc ranks top dog: Andreas Scholl, Sandrine Piau, Nathan Berg and a young Mark Padmore are exquisite. Padmore's opening recitative arioso uses silence more eloquently than any other recording I've heard, while the limpid beauty of Scholl's countertenor voice, combined with the subtlety of his interpretation, makes the simplest melodies the most eloquent. That conductor William Christie applies snappy French dotted rhythms to Handel's score serves to illuminate gestures such as the sarabande lilt in 'Behold the Lamb of God', but his overall coolness undermines the choir, whose dramatic voice is sadly left largely unrealised.

THREE MORE GREAT RECORDINGS



René Jacobs (conductor)

Kerstin Avemo, Patricia Bardon, Lawrence Zazzo, Kobie van Rensburg, Neal Davies; Choir of

Clare College, Cambridge, Freiburger Barockorchester (2006)

Harmonia Mundi HMC 901928 £24.99 Virtuosity makes this performance sizzle. This is the 'Guadagni' version of Messiah, adapted by Handel in 1750 to showcase that celebrated alto castrato, but here everyone is a star. The band's sharp attacks transform familiar numbers, such as 'Why do the Nations' and 'But who may abide', into show-stoppers. Countertenor

Lawrence Zazzo inhabits Guadagni's parts with utter conviction, while René Jacobs extracts from the Choir of Clare College an uncharacteristic flamboyance, particularly in the 'Hallelujah' chorus, where stark contrasts abound.



John Butt (conductor)

Susan Hamilton, Annie Gill, Clare Wilkinson, Nicholas Mulroy, Matthew Brook, Edward Caswell; The

Dunedin Consort & Players (2006) Linn CKD 285 £15.99

The Dunedin Consort and Players strike out daringly from the beaten path in this

AND ONE TO AVOID...



There's something eternal about Thomas Beecham's overscored recording with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus – and not in a good

way. It just seems to go on forever. Tempos are drearily slow, instrumental playing rhythmically slack and often plain out of tune, and dynamics about as subtle as auntie at Christmas after one too many sherries. And as for the singing – you're either subjected to histrionic soloists or lumbering chorus. More mess than Messiah.

If you enjoy Handel's Messiah and would like to try out similar works, see overleaf...

SO, WHERE NEXT...?

We suggest six works to explore after Handel's Messiah

Handel Judas Maccabaeus

Written six years after Messiah, Judas Maccabaeus proved to be one of Handel's most popular oratorios. The work, which is set around 160BC, tells the story of a Jewish rebellion against the pagan Seleucid Empire. It was possibly written to celebrate the English victory at Culloden, all of which explains the contagious excitement of the oratorio's most famous aria, 'See the conqu'ring hero comes'. Judas Maccabaeus is not only similar to Messiah in its form, but its music has the same deftness and ethereal beauty too, complete with stirring choruses. Handel at his best. **Essential recording:** English Chamber Orchestra; Wandsworth School Choir/

Sir Charles Mackerras

DG Archiv 447 6922 (Download on iTunes)

Handel L'Allegro il Penseroso ed il Moderato

Handel's pastoral ode from 1740 takes as its starting point two poems by Milton, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso. The first paints a picture of a joyful person ('Haste thee nymph, and bring with thee/ Jest and youthful Jollity') while the second sketches a thoughtful, melancholy character ('Hence vain deluding joyes'). The libretto, by James Harris, weaves the two together and adds a third - by Charles Jennens: il Moderato. If that sounds like a recipe for chaos, the music blends it all together in a glorious whole: Handel creates a subtle exploration of different moods through a discussion of an idealised landscape. Listen, particularly, to the graceful melancholy of the soprano aria 'Sweet bird, that shun'st the noise of Folly'. **Essential recording:** The King's Consort/ **Robert King**

Hyperion CDA 67283-4 £28.99

Telemann In dulci jubilo

Here's a charming festive moment from Handel's contemporary and compatriot, the perennially underrated Georg Philipp Telemann. By no means a showpiece of Messiah's magnificence - it's but a fragment of the length, for a start - Telemann's 1719 cantata instead takes a gently reflective approach to its seasonal fare: this is the warming glass of mulled wine at home to Messiah's big night out on the town. The effortless elegance of the familiar



opening chorale is continued throughout the rest of the cantata, including winning arias for tenor and bass, the latter of which contains a moment that bears an uncanny resemblance to Bach's Second Brandenburg Concerto, published just two years later. **Essential recording: Collegium** Musicum 90/Simon Standage Chandos CHAN0754X £8.99

Mendelssohn Christus

Mendelssohn might be famous for rediscovering JS Bach in the 19th century, but he was also a champion of Handel. He conducted and edited the Baroque composer's oratorios, so it's no surprise that Handel's influence can be found in Mendelssohn's music. For a seasonal work, try Christus, Mendelssohn's third oratorio. Mendelssohn died before he finished it, but there's plenty of first-rate music in what he did get down on paper - the 13 movements explore the Nativity and the Passion, and include the exquisite four-part chorus 'Es wird ein Stern aus Jakob aufgehn' (There shall come a star out of Jacob).

Essential recording: Accentus; Ensemble Orchestral de Paris/Laurence Equilbey Naïve V5265 £15.99

Mondonville Venite, exultemus

Few works can match the Messiah's 'Hallelujah' chorus for sheer exuberance, but this veritable bouncing ball of choral jollity from 1740 isn't far off the mark. Its composer, Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville, plied his trade in Paris where he was employed as a violinist at both the royal court and the Concert Spirituel concert series. Venite, exultemus is one of the nine surviving grand motets for which he is best known as a composer today, and brilliantly reveals his mastery in creating maximum impact with relatively restrained instrumental forces. Over its 20 minutes we get a series of up-beat arias - the baritone's 'Quoniam ipsius' is particularly infectious - before the chorus rounds

> things off with a virtuosic, allguns-blazing 'Gloria'.

Essential recording: The Choir of New College, Oxford, London Baroque/Edward Higginbottom Hyperion CDA 66296 (Download at www.hyperion-records.co.uk)

Saint-Saëns Oratorio de Noël

Finally, something of a festive wildcard from Saint-Saëns, a

composer so prodigiously gifted that, at an age when most are still wild-eyed and full of wonder at the prospect of Santa and co., he was already busying himself with getting his first few opus numbers into the

catalogue. And yet, he was also a composer from whom the sparkle of youth would never entirely disappear. Composed in 1858, his Oratorio de Noël for choir, organ and orchestra is a suitably awe-struck affair. Don't be fooled by the misleading description of the opening Prelude as being 'In the style of JS Bach', as it sounds nothing like him. Do, however, enjoy the sumptuous array of arias, duets, trios, quartets, quintets and choruses that follows. Joyeux Noël!

Essential recording: Anne Sofie von Otter etc; Mikaeli Chamber Choir/Anders Eby Proprius PRSACD 9057 £12.99

> **Next month:** Sibelius's Violin Concerto





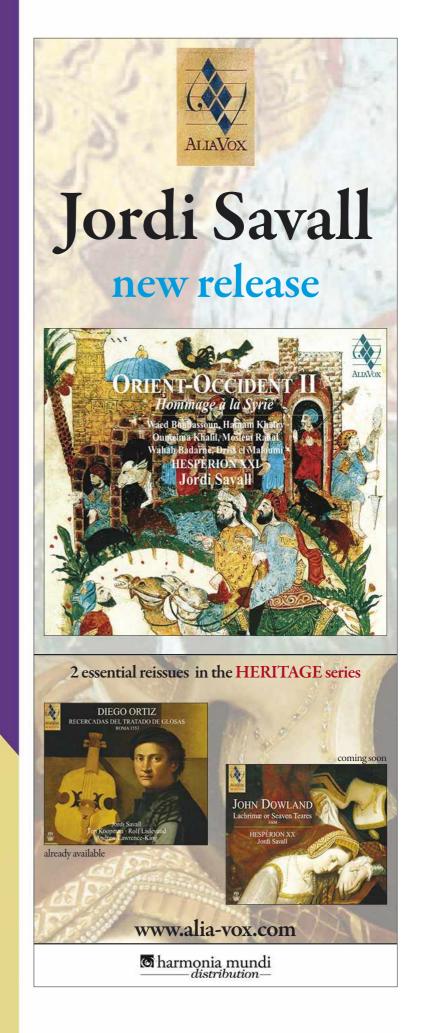
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Recording of the Month

A stunning collection of ancient and modern Christmas choral works performed by the Gabrieli Consort and Paul McCreesh, see p58

Our Recording of the Month features in one of the BBC Music Magazine podcasts free from iTunes or www.classical-music.com

RECORDING OF THE MONTH



Illuminating Christmas

The Gabrieli Consort showcases beautiful festive rarities, says Terry Blain



INCARNATION

Britten's A Boy was Born; works by Martin, Howells, Pott, Dove, Leighton and anonymous Gabrieli Consort; Trebles of Copenhagen Royal Chapel Choir/Paul McCreesh Winged Lion/Signum SIGCD346 77.25 mins

BBC Music Direct

When you're on a roll, you're on a roll: this is the sixth Gabrieli Consort issue on its own 'Winged Lion' imprint, and easily matches

the outstanding quality of its predecessors. This is partly due to conductor Paul McCreesh's bold and imaginative programming, resulting in a Christmas issue which is genuinely challenging and different.

The new disc kicks off with a beautiful setting of Adam lay ybounden by the young English composer Matthew

Martin. Emerging hushed and distanced, as from the very depths of history, Martin's music evokes in an extraordinarily suggestive manner the theological paradox buried within the Eden story - that Mary's

elevation to 'heav'né queen' depended upon sin itself, and the need to purge it later with a saviour. The Gabrieli's rapt and intense performance is remarkable in its poise and tonal control at mainly low dynamic levels.

From there it's back to the 13th century, for the traditional Veni, Veni Emanuel. The opening two verses, first women, then

men, are done in unison, which can be painfully revealing of a choir's technical weaknesses. Here there are none - one simply marvels at the easy unanimity of note placement, and also of nuance and expression.

FURTHER LISTENING

Gabrieli Consort/Paul McCreesh

G & A GABRIELI

A New Venetian Coronation 1595 Gabrieli Consort & Players/McCreesh Winged Lion/Signum SIGCD 287 BBC Music Direct



This a marvellously handled recording conjuring up a "live" event that is greatly aided by the opening

bell-ringing and the ethereal spacious surround of the chanting." Ŝeptember 2012

A SONG OF FAREWELL: MUSIC OF MOURNING & CONSOLATION

Songs by Dove, Elgar, Gibbons, Howells, MacMillan, Morley, Parry etc Gabrieli Consort/Paul McCreesh Winged Lion/Signum SIGCD 281 **BBC** Music Direct



'Already in Gibbons's Drop, Drop, Slow Tears there are numerous indications of the

elevated artistry of Paul McCreesh and the 22 singers of his Gabrieli Consort.' May 2012

BERLIOZ

Grande messe des morts

Robert Murray; Gabrieli Players and Consort; Wrocław Phil; Ensemble Wrocław; Chetham's School of Music Symphonic Brass Ensemble/McCreesh Winged Lion/Signum SIGCD 280 **BBC** Music Direct



McCreesh provides pretty much the enormous forces Berlioz demands - 60 tenors at least

- singing French Latin, as well as mostly original instruments ... it's fascinating.' November 2011

The pattern of modern juxtaposed with ancient continues, Howells's poignantly retrospective Long, long ago rubbing shoulders with the medieval monody of Lullay, lullay, a limpid solo by countertenor Matthew Venner, who sustains its seven-minute span superbly. There's more fine solo work from soprano Ruth Provost at the beginning of Leighton's A Hymn of the Nativity, whose intense, affecting dialogue contrasts strikingly with the placid Sarum Chant Letabundus which



This is a Christmas

issue which is

genuinely different

follows. In the same mellifluous vein is Francis Pott's Balulalow, where Emma Walshe's crystal-pure soprano soars elegantly above the gently undulating choral textures. Jonathan Dove also uses a rocking rhythm to underlay The Three Kings, whose clamorous climax is incisively dispatched by the singers.

Capping the programme is a magnificent account of Britten's A Boy was Born, by turns deeply inward and blazingly expressive. The dauntingly difficult Variation VI ('Noël') which closes the piece is a tour de force of Gabrieli virtuosity: it's an incredibly energised and concentrated piece of singing, and culminates in joy and exuberance.

At the heart of everything is the consummate technical ability and sense of idiom displayed by the 28 Gabrieli singers, and McCreesh's inspirational direction. It's the type of artistry that completely avoids the impression of artifice: you simply feel you're listening directly to what the composer meant by the music. A wonderful Christmas offering: treat yourself or your friends, or both, to it. PERFORMANCE **** RECORDING

ON THE PODCAST Hear excerpts and a discussion of this recording on the **BBC Music** Magazine podcast, available free on iTunes or at www.classical-music.com

PAUL MCCREESH

The British conductor talks to REBECCA FRANKS about the art of programming Christmas recordings



Was this album's title 'Incarnation' the starting point or the finishing touch for this project?

It was more of a finishing touch. I've always wanted to record Britten's A Boy was Born, so I developed the idea, which came from that, of building up a contrast of medieval and 20th-century carols. I wanted to go back to the roots of the Christmas story and, without being Scrooge, to try to get rid of the tinsel and trimmings and find a group of pieces which explain the deep philosophical message of Christmas. It's not about a celebration of the feast, but about the story of the incarnation.

So how much work was involved in shaping the programme? I did some serious digging. I must have listened to 200 pieces at least, of which most were put into the dustbin of history within three bars. I didn't particularly want to include a calypso-style Ding Dong! Merrily on High. I wanted music that will move our listeners in a really deep way. For example, the Matthew Martin piece which opens the disc is absolutely stunning. I found it about four days before we sang it and I just completely fell in love with it. And the Britten piece is just a staggering masterpiece. It's a very serious sing for very serious singers.

The medieval music is also very striking...

I'm not a medievalist by training. I've always loved the music, but I've kind of fallen out of the early music world. It drives me crazy that so much now has to be connected by pseudo-world-music elements: you can't have a beautiful medieval song without adding a whole battery of percussion. To me there's nothing more beautiful than a simple unadorned melody sung directly with a real connection to the beauty of the text. There's also an immense beauty in singing in Old English. Most of these are from the Oxford Book of Carols, so I didn't exactly spend years in libraries. And somehow this music speaks through the centuries.

THIS MONTH'S CRITICS

Our critics number many of the top music specialists whose knowledge and enthusiasm are second to none



Hilary Finch music critic, The Times After reading English and Music at Exeter and Cambridge, Hilary Finch began reviewing and feature-writing for The Times. She now also broadcasts regularly on Radio 3, contributing to CD

Review's Building a Library and making documentaries. She lectures on Lieder, and music of the Nordic countries.

Rob Ainsley critic John Allison editor, Opera; critic, Sunday Malcolm Hayes Telegraph Nicholas Anderson Baroque specialist Terry Blain writer Kate Bolton lecturer. New York University, Florence Garry Booth jazz writer & critic **David Breckbill** musicologist, critic Geoff Brown critic, The Times **Anthony Burton** writer, editor Michael Church critic, The Independent **Christopher Cook** broadcaster, critic **Martin Cotton** producer **Christopher Dingle** Reader in Music at Birmingham Conservatoire Misha Donat writer, producer Jessica Duchen critic, novelist

George Hall writer, editor, translator biographer, composer Julian Haylock writer, editor Ivan Hewett broadcaster, critic Daniel Jaffé writer, critic Stephen Johnson writer, BBC Radio 3 broadcaster Berta Joncus senior lecturer, University of London Erik Levi professor, University of London Max Loppert critic, Opera Calum MacDonald editor, Tempo Andrew McGregor presenter, BBC Radio 3's CD Review David Nice writer, biographer **Roger Nichols** French music specialist **Bayan Northcott** composer, writer

Mark Pappenheim writer, editor Tim Parry writer, editor **Anna Picard** writer, critic **George Pratt** emeritus professor of music, University of Huddersfield **Anthony Pryer** lecturer, Goldsmiths College, London Paul Riley journalist Michael Scott Rohan author, editor **Nick Shave** contributing editor, **BBC** Music Jan Smaczny professor of music, Queen's, Belfast **Geoffrey Smith** presenter, Radio 3 **Michael Tanner** critic, The Spectator Roger Thomas critic Helen Wallace consultant editor, BBC Music Magazine **Barry Witherden** critic

Key to symbols Star ratings are provided for both the performance itself and either the recording's sound quality or a DVD's presentation

Outstanding .	 	 ****
xcellent	 	 ****
Good	 	 *★★
Disappointing	 	 ★★
Poor		*

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CHRISTMAS CHOICE

The *Handel and Haydn Society* offers an American Christmas; *Truro Cathedral* celebrates its 125th anniversary with festive pieces written for the choir; plus Bob Chilcott's seasonal works

REVIEWS BY TERRY BLAIN

muSIC CHRISTMAS CHOICE

Radiant voices

The RIAS Kammerchor shines in this album exploring the Nativity





NOËL! CHRISTMAS! WEIHNACHTEN!

Works by Brahms, Bruch, Grieg, Pärt, Mendelssohn and Poulenc RIAS Kammerchor/ Hans-Christoph Rademann Harmonia Mundi HMC 902170

BBC Music Direct

71-43 mins

£15.99

The exclamation marks in the title belie the essentially serious nature of this recital, themed round aspects of the Christmas story. It's typified

by Brahms's sober, deliberately retrospective O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf, with its contrapuntal Bachian influences. The voice-parts here are scrupulously balanced one against the other by conductor

The unaccompanied singing has a natural, unforced eloquence

Hans-Christoph Rademann, the piece given just the right injection of urgency. There are five pieces included by Eccard and Praetorius, euphoniously crafted music by masters of a previous era. The chirruping part-writing in both Sweelinck's Hodie Christus natus

est and Praetorius's In dulci jubilo is glowingly projected, as the recital enters its penultimate section, 'Rejoicing and consummation'. Other highlights include Bruckner's radiant Ave Maria, and Poulenc's ethereal Videntes stellam. The singing, all unaccompanied, has a natural, unforced eloquence, and is of a standard which makes criticism an impertinence. An outstandingly accomplished issue.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



ON THE WEBSITE

ON THE WEDSILE
Hear extracts from this recording and the rest of this month's choices on the BBC Music Magazine website www.classical-music.com



RÓS: SONGS OF **CHRISTMAS**

Works by Fagerheim, Hildegard von Bingen, Nordqvist, Praetorius etc Norwegian Soloists' Choir/ Grete Pedersen BIS BIS-2029 (hybrid CD/SACD) 52:30 mins **BBC Music Direct**

There's some gorgeous music in this programme, although it's difficult to follow the thematic thread which allegedly binds it together. The music ranges from a charming arrangement of No koma Guds englar (The Angels of God), a 19th-century Norwegian carol, to realisations of serene pieces by Hildegard von Bingen. There are marked folk influences, as in Den fagraste rosa (The Fairest of Roses), atmospherically sung by Berit Opheim. Accompaniments are by violin, double bass and lute, who together provide instrumental interludes. The Norwegian Soloists' Choir is excellent.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



AN AMERICAN CHRISTMAS

Works by Bassi, Billings, Holst, Ives, Lauridsen and Leontovich etc Handel and Haydn Society/ Harry Christophers Coro COR16117 63:02 mins **BBC** Music Direct £9.99

Does Christmas sound different in America? Partly. Over half of the selections here are American in origin and little-heard in the UK. Among the discoveries are the rousing works of William Billings, two of whose bracing carols are included, and the tender A Christmas Carol by Charles

Ives. Fascinating also to compare the American style of singing, more vigorous in attack and more forcefully enunciated, with our own more mannerly tradition. The cover notes are uncommonly interesting, the performances fresh and arresting. PERFORMANCE ****



RECORDING

4 GIRLS 4 HARPS **AT CHRISTMAS**

Carols arranged for four harps 4 Girls 4 Harps Discovery DMV107 58:35 mins

BBC Music Direct

This will blow away the cobwebs sparklingly energetic arrangements for four harps of favourite carols. The '4 Girls' - Harriet Adie, Keziah Thomas, Eleanor Turner and Elizabeth Scorah – do the arranging themselves, with versatility and imagination. I specially enjoyed the plinking accompaniment to Il est né, le divin enfant, and the swirling carillons of See Amid the Winter Snow. Ensemble is watertight, and there's a real rhythmic élan to the playing which keeps you listening. Three appearances by soprano Helen Winter add extra variety.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



£13.99



TRURO 125

Works by Bednall, Drayton, Fitkin, Jackson, MacMillan, Pott etc Truro Cathedral Choir/Christopher Gray Regent REGCD422 68:52 mins **BBC Music Direct** £10.99

Truro Cathedral Choir is 125 years old and this commemorative disc focuses on pieces written for it, most of them recently. They include four works commissioned for the cathedral's annual service of Nine Lessons and Carols, notably Graham Fitkin's The Christmas Truce. It's a moving setting of Frederick Niven's poem about Christmas Day 1914, when Allied and German troops suspended hostilities temporarily, and met across the trenches. Julian Philips's haunting I Sing of a Maiden is also outstanding. A bold, imaginative programme of mainly

unfamiliar music, with uniformly excellent performances.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





CHILCOTT

The Rose in the Middle of Winter Commotio/Matthew Berry Naxos 8 573159 79-31 mins

BBC Music Direct

£6.99

Is Bob Chilcott the new John Rutter? He's certainly accumulating a formidable portfolio of Christmas music, much of it gathered on this Naxos collection. Chilcott shares Rutter's facility with melody: the sweetly unravelling The Advent Candle is a good example. An ex-chorister himself, he also sets words very naturally, as the deft syllabic juggling of The Rose in the Middle of Winter makes evident. Technically Chilcott's music is often more demanding than Rutter's, but that's no problem for the excellent singers of Commotio, expertly conducted here by Matthew Berry.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





CHRISTMAS **LULLABIES**

Carols and Iullabies by Rubbra, Warlock, Quilter, Ireland etc Charlotte de Rothschild (soprano); Danielle Perrett (harp) Nimbus NI 7095 48 mins

BBC Music Direct

£11.99

Charlotte de Rothschild has toured themed programmes of song internationally, enjoying success in several continents. Sadly her voice does not transfer well to disc. The account of Warlock's Adam lay ybounden, for instance, reveals a tendency to pinched, sour tonal production, and a squalliness in louder passages. These problems destabilise Reger's Maria Wiegenlied, where the unpredictability of Rothschild's vibrato and squeaky high notes are an issue - in Britten's Corpus Christi Carol they are virtually unlistenable. This does neither singer nor record company credit. PERFORMANCE



HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Works by Praetorius, Becker, Wade, JS Bach, Gruber etc François Leleux (oboe); Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks/Florian Helgath BR Klassik 900507 73:29 mins £12.99

BBC Music Direct

Here's another superb German choir, in an engagingly varied programme including Bach, Mendelssohn, Britten, Grieg, Handel and Whitacre. Each track is a treat in itself, but the warmth and pliant expressivity of Praetorius's Es ist ein Ros entsprungen is particularly attractive, as is the expectant swell of tone at the beginning of Albert Becker's Machet die Tore weit, and a beautifully blended Still, still, still, in Jürgen Golle's arrangement. Four oboe solos (by Bach and Telemann) punctuate the choral sets, and there's some jolly bell-ringing at the disc's conclusion. Frohe Weihnachten! ****

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



REIOICE AND **BE MERRY!**

Works by Saint-Martin, Baker, Briggs, Bryan, Shiner, Vaughan Williams, Sumsion, Hollins etc Paul Walton (organ) Regent REGCD406 77:48 mins

BBC Music Direct £10.99

Saint-Martin, Baker, Bryan, Shiner. Not household names, but all contribute to this cunningly compiled recital of seasonal organ music. Paul Walton unleashes the roaring instrument of Bristol Cathedral (where he is assistant organist), a beast of wonderfully vivid colorations. There are quieter selections, including Samuel Barber's contemplative Chorale Prelude on Silent Night, and John Ireland's touching The Holy Boy. But the real fun here is when Walton pulls the stops out on the bigger pieces. Try his barnstorming assault on David Briggs's jubilant Sortie on 'In Dulci Jubilo' for size - epic! ****

PERFORMANCE RECORDING ****

IN BRIEF

Reviewed by Terry Blain

ADVENT CALENDAR

Works by Archer, Bach, Chilcott, Cornelius, Wood, Rutter, Poston etc The Choir of Somerville College, Oxford/David Crown Stone Records 5060192780338 68:04 mins **BBC Music Direct** £12.99



Lusty performances, and a nice mix of familiar and less familiar selections. A touch over-

keen in places, and rarely subtle interpretively. The over-resonant acoustic gives a blowsy impression. PERFORMANCE

RECORDING

SURROUNDED BY ANGELS

Carol arrangements Ensemble Galilei Sono Luminus DSL-92173 57:33 mins **BBC Music Direct** £20.99



Well-known Christmas tunes in evocative arrangements for flute, uilleann pipes,

violin, shawm, bodhran, banjo, harp and viola da gamba. Warmly involving music-making and very clear recorded sound.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

DER MUSIKALISCHE ADVENTSKALENDER

Works by Adam, Bach, Gies, Poulenc, Praetorius, Reger, Schubert etc SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart etc Hänssler Classic CD 93.308 78:47 mins £12.99 **BBC Music Direct**



SWR (a radio broadcaster) musters choirs, orchestras, soloists, and even a big band, to conjure

the seasonal atmosphere. Genres mix easily and entertainingly.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

BEDNALL

Welcome All Wonders The Choir of the Queen's College, Oxford/Owen Rees Signum SIGCD335 77:55 mins **BBC Music Direct** £9.99



A Christmas Cantata in 15 movements, with organ and trumpet, Bednall's work makes a bright,

immediate impression, the idiom accessible without being superficial. **** PERFORMANCE RECORDING ****

RECORDING

ORCHESTRAL

Leonidas Kavakos is exceptional in the Brahms Violin Concerto; **Simone Young** reveals the strengths of Bruckner's Symphony No. 0; plus a Schubert Sixth Symphony that falls flat

$lue{m}$ \mathcal{M} SIC ORCHESTRAL CHOICE

Swan Lake takes flight

James Ehnes shines in ballet from the Bergen Phil, writes Daniel Jaffé



TCHAIKOVSKY

Swan Lake (complete)

James Ehnes (violin); Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra/Neeme Järvi Chandos CHSA 5124 (hybrid CD/SACD) 81:14 mins (2 discs)

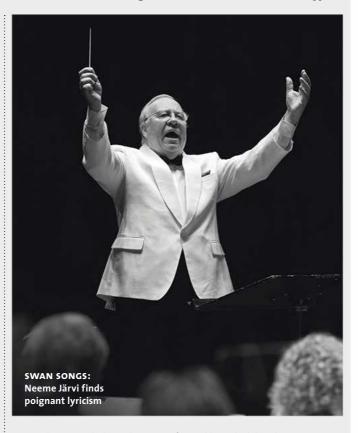
BBC Music Direct

Sleeping Beauty, Neeme Järvi's previous Tchaikovsky excursion (reviewed February 2013), is often called the composer's greatest ballet, yet I can't help feeling that Swan Lake was nearly greater. Certainly it wins hands down for haunting memorability. Unfortunately it was the most meddled of Tchaikovsky's three ballets: before joining the international repertory, several of its dances were swapped around

Bergen Philharmonic offers the most polished playing

or even transplanted into different Acts, and whole numbers cut or substituted. Swan Lake's score has since been recorded more or less as originally composed, but to the best of my knowledge Järvi's is the first to include all four numbers of Act III's extra Pas de Deux, added by Tchaikovsky at the insistence of Moscow's prima ballerina assoluta Anna Sobeshchanskaya. Of that sequence only its sultry opening number, superbly played by violinist James Ehnes, raises itself above merely functional ballet music.

Ehnes has more to do in this ballet than he had in Sleeping



Beauty; he is superb throughout, raising the 'Danse Russe' (another addition forced on Tchaikovsky) into a smouldering display of Gypsy-style virtuosity. The Bergen Philharmonic offers the most polished playing, driven by Järvi at often faster than usual tempos (with exceptions including the perversely slow Hungarian and Neapolitan dances in Act III). Generally, though, when it matters Järvi abandons his brisk manner for an understated yet manifest sensitivity to Tchaikovsky's poignant lyricism,

notably in the lakeside Act II, Tchaikovsky's own favourite of the four Acts. More warmth and humour elsewhere could have made this a dream Swan Lake.

PERFORMANCE

RECORDING

We explore the magical world of Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker p24

ON THE WEBSITE

ON THE WEDDILE
Hear extracts from this recording and the rest of this month's choices on the BBC Music Magazine website www.classical-music.com



Symphony in C sharp minor; Poems of the Sea

London Symphony Orchestra/Dalia Atlas Naxos 8.573241 68:26 mins **BBC Music Direct**

The C sharp minor Symphony, composed between 1901 and 1903 while Bloch was a student in Germany, is conceived on an epic scale and boasts a remarkably assured and sophisticated handling of the late-Romantic symphony orchestra. Not surprisingly, the score abounds in strong allusions to the music of Richard Strauss, Mahler (especially in the pastoral slow movement) and Bruckner (in the brass fanfares of the scherzo and the jaunty fugue subjects which opens the Finale). Any hints of the rhapsodic Hebraic style Bloch would pursue later in his career are relatively few and far between.

Dalia Atlas has made several distinguished recordings of Bloch's music for Naxos and this new release, with its accomplished playing from the LSO, demonstrates her continuing commitment to the composer. Direct comparison with the previous recording of the Symphony made over 20 years ago and featuring the Malmö Symphony Orchestra under Lev Markiz (on BIS) proves fascinating. In many respects the Swedish orchestra delivers a more blended ensemble than their English counterparts and Markiz negotiates the ebb and flow of the lengthy first movement with a greater sense of urgency, especially in the Allegro agitato. Elsewhere, however, I find Atlas and the LSO the more convincing in the reflective lyricism of the Symphony's slow movement and in the purposeful phrasing of the Finale's fugal material. Erik Levi

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



BRAHMS

Violin Concerto in D, Op. 77; Hungarian Dances Nos 1, 2, 6 & 11 (arr. Joachim) BARTÓK

Rhapsody No. 1 for violin and piano, BB 94; Rhapsody No. 2 for violin and piano, BB96

Leonidas Kavakos (violin); Leipzig Gewandhaus/Riccardo Chailly; Peter Nagy (piano) Decca 478 5342 74:17 mins

BBC Music Direct

£13.99

The Brahms Violin Concerto has been recorded so often that exceptional performances should not be as rare as they are. But this is one of them. Too often lacklustre orchestral partnerships can hamper fine soloists; here, though, Riccardo Chailly and the Leipzig Gewandhaus are a glory, rich-toned but translucent and supporting violinist Leonidas Kavakos's purity of tone and inspired phrasing at every step.

Tempos are spacious, with plenty of room for the music to breathe, but momentum is never lost and Chailly calibrates an ideal balance. Kavakos's violin tone is super-refined and elegant. And though devoid of sentimentality it is certainly not so of feeling; one astonishing nuance in the central slow movement, just before the main theme returns, almost stops the heart.

The fillers are linked to the Concerto via its first soloist, the Hungarian-born virtuoso Joseph Ioachim, a close friend of Brahms and a vital influence on much of his chamber music. Kavakos and Peter Nagy perform four of the Brahms Hungarian Dances in Joachim's violin and piano arrangements as well as Bartók's two Rhapsodies, also based on Hungarian dance forms. The leap from Brahms to Bartók is nevertheless a jolt in programming terms; and Kavakos's streamlined style seems less comfortable in the Rhapsodies than in the Concerto. This music seems to demand a special earthiness that he doesn't quite achieve (compared to, say, Barnabás Kelemen on Hungaroton), and the sense of soaring above rather than delving deep into visceral rhythms persists through the Brahms dances. Jessica Duchen PERFORMANCE





BRAHMS

Symphonies Nos 1 & 2; Tragic Overture; Variations on a Theme of Haydn LSO/Valery Gergiev

LSO Live LSO 0733 (hybrid CD/SACD) 125:18 mins (2 discs)

BBC Music Direct

£15.99

This Brahms double album enshrines performances that Valery Gergiev gave with the LSO at the Barbican in the latter months of 2012, and they richly deserved preservation. Gergiev produces a gripping, architecturally secure account of the First Symphony: his rather ponderous tempo for the firstmovement Allegro imparts a sort of baleful inevitability to its progress, and the finale's overall transition from darkness to light is vividly conveyed. While his First Symphony is muscular and big-boned, Gergiev's account of the Second distinguished by finer orchestral playing - is refined and sensitive.

The debate as to whether to observe the first-movement repeats in Brahms's first three Symphonies has been pretty well decided in the last few decades: of course you do. But still few performances manage the lead back into No. 2's repeat with the perfect simplicity and naturalness that Gergiev achieves here. The chiaroscuro of timbres in the slow movement is hauntingly brought out, and this awareness of the richness and variety of Brahms's orchestral

sound is also manifest in the Haydn Variations. This receives a delightful reading: not only do the individual variations flow on from one another with admirable fluidity, but they are full of exquisite playing and sensitivity to sonority - the plangent oboe solo in Variation III is one instance, the peasant liveliness of the way the brass ensemble kick the air at the start of Variation VI another. Only in the Tragic Overture did I feel the interpretation was a little on the routine side, where more could have been made of the expansive second subject and the mysterious hushed development. Calum MacDonald PERFORMANCE ****

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



BRUCKNER

Symphony No. 0 in D minor
Hamburg Philharmonic/Simone Young
Oehms Classics OC685 49:41 mins
BBC Music Direct £12.9

Bruckner said that this Symphony, composed between the ones we know as the First and Second, was 'merely an attempt', but it's much more than a curiosity. The harmonic twists, melodic turns, and orchestral textures look forward to the composer's later works: the challenge for the conductor is that the material isn't as distinguished nor its development as assured.

Simone Young prevents the music from sitting down too much in the

main, although the gear change into the second theme in the first movement is unsettling. The sound of the orchestra is smooth and well balanced in the live recording: brass chorales are sonorous and wind solos eloquently projected.

The slow movement shows the strengths of the Hamburg strings, with depth of tone and smooth phrasing, and a welcome avoidance of cloying vibrato. Here the structural problems are less obtrusive, despite some tendency to wander on Bruckner's part. Young keeps the music moving and there's a sense of rhythmic tautness. That's also on display in the vigorous Scherzo, and the relaxed Ländler trio is nicely poised. Even more than the earlier movements, the finale contains embryos of things to come, in its bold unison string passages and juxtaposition of different musical elements. Not quite full Brucknerian coherence as yet, but here welded into a satisfying whole. Martin Cotton PERFORMANCE

RECORDING



GLASS

Cello Concerto No. 2 'Naqoyqatsi'
Matt Haimovitz (cello); Cincinnati
Symphony/Dennis Russell Davies
Orange Mountain Music 0087 37:81 mins
BBC Music Direct £13.99

This Concerto grew from music Glass composed in 2001 for

Nagoygatsi, his third collaboration with the innovative documentary director, Godfrey Reggio. Glass had completed his first Cello Concerto (dedicated to, and premiered by, Julian Lloyd Webber) shortly before, but it was not until a decade later that he decided to turn the film score into a 'proper' concerto. I'm familiar with the first films in the trilogy, Koyaanisqatsi and Powaqqatsi but haven't seen Naqoyqatsi: apparently its images were largely digitally created. And Glass wanted to compose 'a very acoustic piece that could be played by a real orchestra'.

Like its predecessor, while this Concerto has Glass's fingerprints (jabbing chords, insistent ostinatos, imperious heavy-weight brass figures, stately cascading melodic motifs, clear harmonic movement) all over it, it includes some lilting, lyrical melodic lines for the soloist and members of the orchestra, sometimes giving the piece a neo-Romantic flavour while remaining very clearly classic Glass.

Matt Haimovitz's tone and shaping of phrases achieve a fine balance between the expression of emotion and sentiment on one hand and robust assertion in the face of the inexorable progress of the orchestra. Dennis Russell Davies controls both delicate episodes and powerhouse passages with his customary skill. Barry Witherden

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





HAYDN

Symphonies Nos 6 & 82; Violin Concerto in G

Aisslinn Nosky (violin); Handel and Haydn Society/Harry Christophers Coro COR 16113 69:19 mins

£9.99 **BBC** Music Direct In addition to his renown as a choral director, Harry Christophers has a burgeoning practice as an orchestral conductor. These Haydn performances with the period players of the venerable Handel and Haydn Society - founded in Boston in as long ago as 1815 - are as insightful in their way as anything he has done with his own choir The Sixteen.

The delectable early concertantesymphony Le Matin, No. 6 - one of a trilogy that Haydn probably wrote to impress his new employer Count Esterházy – is as crisp in its articulation and vivacious in its many solos as any of the rival 'historically

informed' recordings. But Christophers also subtly modulates the dynamics of almost every phrase, so that the music really breathes.

The even earlier Violin Concerto in G – generally attributed to Haydn, though no autograph survives - is similarly brought to life by the vibrant and inventively decorated reading of the Society's concertmaster Aisslinn Nosky. The outer movements of the first of the Paris Symphonies – *The Bear* – have an exultant fierceness and drive that contrasts tellingly with the moments of delicacy and humour. The tempo for the second movement variations might at first seem a bit hasty, but when Christophers steps it up still further for Haydn's burst of rusticity in the coda the effect is wholly convincing. The recorded acoustic of Boston's famed Symphony Hall is resonant yet clear. Bayan Northcott ****

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



HINDEMITH

Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by CM von Weber; Violin Concerto; Konzertmusik Midori (violin); NDR Sinfonieorchester/ Christoph Eschenbach Ondine ODE 1214-2 67:23 mins

BBC Music Direct

£12.99 Despite the fervent advocacy of David Oistrakh and Isaac Stern, Hindemith's 1939 Violin Concerto has remained surprisingly neglected both on disc and in the concert hall. Yet the appearance of two recordings in recent months, this one from Midori following hard on the heels of Frank Peter Zimmermann's release on the BIS label (reviewed November 2013), suggests there may be a possible upturn in its reputation. Certainly it's one of Hindemith's most emotionally charged works very much reflecting the composer's deep sense of unease as Europe plunged headlong into war.

Midori taps into the music's vein of anxiety, delivering taut sinewy playing in the outer movements and bringing lyrical eloquence to the more reflective passages in the central Langsam. Occasionally her tone is a little thin in the highest registers and she does not command the same range of colours, or the variety of articulation and interpretative imagination as Zimmermann. Christoph Eschenbach and the NDR Sinfonieorchester provide pungent

accompaniments, but the recording is slightly muffled, making it difficult to decipher some of the more densely scored passages.

The muffled sound also mars the impact of the brilliantly orchestrated Symphonic Metamorphosis. Eschenbach injects a great deal of energy into the opening movement which is taken at an unusually fast tempo. But the German orchestra sounds a bit too po-faced in the jazzy syncopations of the Turandot scherzo, Eschenbach overlooking the music's wit and sense of fun. In contrast to this somewhat disappointing experience, Eschenbach is absolutely inspired in the Konzertmusik, the NDR's strings and brass relishing the music's ebullience and dynamic power. Erik Levi PERFORMANCE

(KONZERTMUSIK) (THE REST) RECORDING





MAHLER

Symphony No. 2 Philharmonia/Benjamin Zander Linn CKD 452 89:74 mins **BBC** Music Direct

£18.99

Benjamin Zander's Resurrection Symphony begins well enough with a clear-etched, finely nuanced funeral march and especially lovely intimations of an other-worldly paradise from cor anglais and oboe. I began to doubt the mannered hesitations and nudges of the minuet, though the quieter dynamics are still beautifully maintained. With the scherzo narrative of St Anthony's sermon to unheeding fish, the familiar Zander leisureliness becomes a liability: yes, this is marked down as an easy going, slithery waltz, but here its movement is stiff to the point of torpor and the sudden incursions of trumpets and brass don't press it forward as they should.

Salvation is on hand from the ever-meaningful, velvet-toned mezzo Sarah Connolly, a real asset on an earlier Zander disc twinning the First Symphony with the *Lieder eines* fahrenden Gesellen. But judgment day almost grinds to a halt with little sense of flaming urgency. You can tell this is a conductor who tends more to the concert hall, for there's none of the necessary operatic vividness here. You couldn't wish for a more floaty soprano than Miah Persson, but the forward balance - which is

close, too, for the strings - doesn't let her rise imperceptibly out of the chorus. Orchestral quality is never in doubt, with superb Philharmonia contributions including outstanding clarinets and nightingale flute-andpiccolo. But there are many more vivid Resurrections on disc than this. David Nice

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



MASCAGNI

L'apoteosi della cicogna; Visione lirica; La gavotta delle bambole; Danza esotica; Ave Maria; Padre nostro; Mein erster Walzer; Serenade; Suite from 'The Eternal City'

Luciano Ganci (tenor); Filarmonica '900 Teatro Regio Torino/Gianandrea Noseda Chandos 10789 61:00 mins

£12.99

BBC Music Direct

Gianandrea Noseda's exploration of Italian orchestral music continues with this selection of mainly smaller pieces by Mascagni, several of them new to disc. They encompass 50 years of the composer's life, from 1880 to 1930. And they run from religious arrangements - the Ave Maria pleasantly sung by Luciano Ganci is the Intermezzo from

BACKGROUND TO...



Pietro Mascagni 1863-1945 Best known for his one-act opera Cavalleria rusticana, which was an instant

hit at its premiere in Rome in 1890 and is still popular today, Pietro Mascagni is often seen as the father of verismo in Italian opera. With 15 operas to his name, Mascagni was mostly focused on writing music for the theatre but he also wrote songs, choral pieces and orchestral works. And he was no slouch as a conductor: he was invited by Mahler, no less, to perform in Vienna and he conducted his own operas at Covent Garden. Internationally famous, in 1926 he appeared on the cover of Time magazine.

IDEAL TONE:

Renaud Capuçon

soars in Saint-Saëns

Cavalleria rusticana with words added – to the substantial suite of incidental music to Hall Caine's once famous play *The Eternal City*, premiered in London in 1902. Mascagni brings colour and atmosphere to interludes in a political drama set in late 19th-century Rome.

Attractive miniatures in lightmusic mode, such as La gavotta delle bambole (1900) and Danza esotica (1891), demonstrate Mascagni's gift for melody as well as his orchestral skills, while the dance suite Mein erster Walzer (1887) is no less appealing. More ambitious in style are the Visione lirica (1922) and L'apoteosi della cicogna - 'The Apotheosis of the Stork' being Mascagni's contribution to a jointly written ballet score and his final orchestral piece (1930). Both abound in the searching harmonic progressions Mascagni later explored, which aren't always convincingly brought off in performance, though Noseda and his impeccable Turin players manage them with distinction, as they do everything on the disc. George Hall PERFORMANCE



RECORDING

MOZART

Symphonies Nos 39-41 Orchestre des Champs-Elysées/ Philippe Herreweghe Phi LPH 011 98:20 mins (2 discs) BBC Music Direct

£24.99

Mozart's final symphonic triptych, composed in just a few weeks in the summer of 1788, is widely acknowledged as one of the miracles of musical history. Not only are all three works profoundly original but each is utterly unlike its companions in character and sonority. The E flat Symphony No. 39 is saturated with the sound of clarinets and, in order to throw them into prominence, Mozart omits the oboes for the only time in his Symphonies. Symphony No. 40, in an agitated G minor, was originally written without clarinets though Mozart subsequently added them, and does without trumpets and drums; while the Jupiter, in a bright C major, makes unabashed use of those military-style instruments, and its famous contrapuntal finale closes with a blaze of fanfares.

Philippe Herreweghe and the players of the Orchestre des Champs-Elysées are good at bringing out the

contrasting tonal palettes of these pieces, though in the first movement of Symphony No. 39 the glaring sound of the natural trumpets tends to overbalance the violins. These are generally no-nonsense accounts, with brisk tempos of a kind favoured these days in period-instrument performances. The opening Allegro of No. 39 is actually somewhat overheated for my taste, and the Ländlerlike trio of its minuet, with the clarinets famously playing at opposite ends of their range, lacks charm. But these are impressive, if somewhat unyielding performances, and they bring out the music's intricate textures with admirable clarity. Misha Donat

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





PENDERECKI

Piano Concerto 'Resurrection' (2007 revised version)

Florian Uhlig (piano); Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra/Lukasz Borowicz Hänssler Classic CD 98.018 37:50 mins

BBC Music Direct £9.99

One of the most controversial new works in recent Polish music, Penderecki's Piano Concerto has not lacked for detractors, but nor has it been short of advocates: this recording from Florian Uhlig and Łukasz Borowicz's Polish RSO comes only a few months after Barry Douglas's Naxos version with the Warsaw Philharmonic under Antoni Wit (reviewed July 2013). It was Douglas who gave the 2007 premiere of this revised version, five years after the work was withdrawn in the wake of an incendiary review of its first Polish performance, which claimed that the concerto represented 'the belated triumph of Socialist Realism'.

Even in its revised form, the Concerto still makes Khrennikov sound cutting-edge. Its echoes of Rachmaninov derive not least from the use of the Dies Irae, and slabs of D minor-ish tonality reminiscent of the Third Concerto, but it is not alone among recent concertos in resembling a post-Romantic mash-up. As its 'Resurrection' title indicates, the work is also burdened by an attempt to address the events of 11 September 2001, so it is remarkable that Uhlig and Borowicz manage to shape such a lucid and at times even elegant performance. Uhlig has all the virtuosity required, but with a duration of just under 38

minutes, this disc may leave listeners wanting more. *John Allison*PERFORMANCE

RECORDING





RACHMANINOV

Symphony No. 1; The Isle of the Dead Detroit Symphony/Leonard Slatkin Naxos 8.573234 66:20 mins

BBC Music Direct

£6.99

There's a slightly better match here of conductor, orchestra and recording to the works in question than I found on the previous Naxos Rachmaninov instalment (Third Symphony and Symphonic Dances, reviewed in the May 2013 issue). The dark bass sound works well in both openings, the mysterious one at the start of The Isle of the Dead and the menacing motto which kicks off the early Symphony. It would have been better to start the disc with the Symphony, not just in terms of chronology but because the subject of the Symphony seems to 'die' at its end, so it could begin the gloomy journey to the cypress-dominated islet.

The more emphatic the music, though, the more oppressive the close and airless string sound; the violins battle it with some extraordinary lyric purity in the Symphony, but the first-movement climax of chants

and bells needs more space. Slatkin still does long-term brooding very well but, as in the Third Symphony, sinks a finale which needs much greater volatility and urgency with stodgy tempos. Slatkin avows that he conversed with Eugene Ormandy, the first great interpreter of this Symphony, who advised him on certain alterations he'd made to the inexperienced young Rachmaninov's thick orchestration. As I can't detect them, it would be good to know where and why. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



SAINT-SAËNS

Violin Concerto No. 3; Cello Concerto No. 1

Renaud Capuçon (violin), Gautier Capuçon (cello); Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France/Lionel Bringuier Erato 934 1342 66:00 mins

BBC Music Direct

£11.99

In the Violin Concerto, Renaud Capuçon and the conductor provide a lesson in how to generate *rubato* organically from the material, taking Saint-Saëns's frequent *dolce* and *tranquillo* markings as guides towards a wholly coherent reading of the work. If there's not much 'quasi Allegretto' about the tempo they take for the middle movement, all

I can say is that (irritatingly for us pedants) their slower speed works. The brass band version of the choral in the finale sounds as curiously vulgar as ever: we must take comfort from the thought that, played by a late 19th-century French band, it would have sounded much worse... Elsewhere, the soloist's tone and technique deserve the highest praise.

The two soloists join forces in the fine La muse et le poète, finding both the tenderness and the pain and sombreness noted by a Parisian critic of the premiere. I'm a good deal less happy about the imposed slower tempos in the Cello Concerto, which smack of self indulgence. Also the cellist's bowing under pressure tends to be scratchy. But the central dance, a Minuet in all but name, is delightful, not least because the rhythms emerge as printed. The recording is clear and spacious. Roger Nichols

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

Hear the BBC Music team give its verdict on this CD on our 'First Listen' podcast, available from iTunes & www.classical-music.com



SCHUBERT

Symphony No. 6; incidental music from Rosamunde, D 797 Swedish Symphony/Thomas Dausgaard

BIS BIS-1987 SACD 62:46 mins £12.99 **BBC Music Direct**

I was so shocked by the dullness of Schubert's Sixth Symphony on this disc that as soon as I had listened to it I put on Thomas Beecham's recording from 1955, still sounding excellent. I was in a different world. The Sixth is no masterpiece whoever conducts it, in fact it seems to me the weakest of the Symphonies. Schubert is being ambitious in it: he aimed to learn from Beethoven in the brevity of the themes and their lengthy development, and from Rossini in the construction of climaxes. As even the authoritative Schubert scholar John Reed admits, the Symphony 'is not entirely successful'. Schubert was trying not to do what he did best at that stage of his development, which was to write glorious melodies, as in the adorable Fifth Symphony.

Even so, I'm sure that such resolute charmlessness as Thomas Dausgaard and his Swedish Chamber Orchestra bring to the work would have dismayed the composer.

Tempos are fairly brisk, but every last repeat is observed, and several stretches of this work yield up their secrets all too readily at a first hearing, let alone a second. The most interesting movement is the third, Schubert's first symphonic scherzo, and almost a carbon copy of that in Beethoven's First Symphony. But even here the trio, an initially strange and interesting piece, outstays its welcome. And the last movement seems to jog along forever. The Rosamunde music, rapidly cobbled together, only delights in material which is put to better use in the second movement of the A minor Quartet. Michael Tanner PERFORMANCE

RECORDING



SCHUMANN

Violin Concerto in D minor; Fantasie in C minor; Violin Concerto in A minor (transcr.) Baiba Skride (violin); Danish National Symphony Orchestra/John Storgårds Orfeo C 854 131 A 70:25 mins

BBC Music Direct

Schumann's Violin Concerto was withheld by Clara Schumann and Brahms, who feared it betrayed a weakening of the composer's powers right at the end of his creative life, and it didn't resurface until the 1930s. Yet the Fantasie for violin and orchestra, also composed in 1853, was published and performed the following year. These days, it's the Concerto that gets an occasional outing, while the Fantasie has remained virtually unknown. The latter is a fascinating piece which takes a leaf out of Mendelssohn's famous Violin Concerto by bringing its cadenza to a close with ricocheting arpeggios beneath which the orchestra steals in with the reprise of the main theme. As for the Concerto, it has a slow movement of otherworldly beauty, though the lumbering polonaise rhythm of its finale remains problematic.

The claim that Schumann made a violin version of his earlier Cello Concerto needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. He may have suggested the transcription, but it does virtually nothing other than to shift the solo part up an octave (or sometimes two), thereby unavoidably compromising the music's character and sonority. Baiba Skride negotiates it admirably, without being able to invest it with sufficient intensity, but her silky

pianissimo playing in the Violin Concerto is a decided asset. It's a valuable and enterprising disc. Misha Donat

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





R STRAUSS

Also sprach Zarathustra; Don Juan; Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche Berlin Philharmonic/Gustavo Dudamel DG 479 1041 80:00 mins £13.99

BBC Music Direct

What most surprises me about Dudamel's Strauss interpretations is how little they seem the work of an exuberant young conductor. Don *Juan* is the most arthritic of the three figures in question, and takes things too slowly. The fact that the oboe solo portraying the second, deepest love of the two episodes is so beguiling is no excuse for Dudamel to linger. The adventures of Till Eulenspiegel, prankster extraordinaire, are framed by two 'upon a time' themes lacking spontaneous warmth. Still, some escapades work well, the D clarinet is supremely brilliant and there's a real chill from the violas as our hero has a premonition of his untimely end.

Most frustrating is *Also sprach* Zarathustra, because there are even more unique pleasures here: the clarity of the string rushes in the sweep of the Joys and Passions sequence, the colours of the twilight zones, the high trumpet heralding the joy of the waltzing convalescent (where one of the co-leaders, Daniel Stabrawa, really shines). But Dudamel's heavier tempos merely accentuate how this big orchestral work is split into a predominantly ponderous first half and an incandescent second.

Sound is nowhere near as synthetic as it used to be in the Herbert von Karajan Berlin era, but an impression of shallow brilliance remains, with wind solos too far upfront. In no way other than the playing, then, is this the high-class gambit DG might have hoped. It's outshone by recent Strauss orchestral releases from Markus Stenz (Hyperion) and Francois-Xavier Roth (Hanssler). The old Concertgebouw/Bernard Haitink recording shines brighter in Zarathustra, and Haitink also has a livelier grip on the two more human heroes. David Nice

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

REISSUES

Reviewed by Julian Haylock

OFFENBACH

Overtures to Orphée aux enfers; La belle Hélène; La Périchole etc Philharmonia/Marriner (overtures): Pittsburg Symphony/Previn Decca 478 5408 (1982) 65:29 mins **BBC Music Direct**



An enchanting selection of toetapping miniatures from the 'Mozart of the Champs-Elysées',

proving that the famous Can-Can was no mere one-off.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

VERDI

Ballet music from the operas The Met Opera Orchestra/James Levine Sony Classical 88765478102 (1993) 66:16 mins

BBC Music Direct

£6.99



For those who like Verdi's music but could happily do without all that singing, this fine

selection of ballet highlights played with both passion and eloquence should be just the ticket.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

DANCE MIX

Bernstein: Mambo; Adams: The Chairman Dances; plus works by Kernis, Schiff, Larsen etc Baltimore Symphony/David Zinman Decca Eloquence 480 7513 (1995) 70:42 mins

BBC Music Direct

£10.99



A stunningly played and engineered section of (mostly) vivacious dance numbers from

Zinman's distinguished tenure in Baltimore, including John Adams's classic The Chairman Dances.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

BALLET FAVOURITES

Works by Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, Ravel, Poulenc, Saint-Saëns etc Artists including Karajan, Ansermet, Bernstein, Fistoulari and more Major Classics M3CD308 229:00 mins **BBC Music Direct** £6.99 (3 discs)



A generous collection of mostly fine performances dating from the early years of stereo, highlighted

by Fistoulari's exhilarating Delibes and Ansermet's Stravinsky. PERFORMANCE ***

RECORDING



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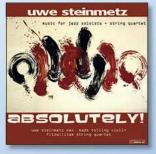
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OPERA

The *Chicago Symphony Orchestra* plays with precision under *Riccardo* Muti in Verdi's Otello; Peter Eötvös adapts Gabriel García Márquez for the stage; plus a work that reveals the 11-year-old Mozart's genius

$lue{m} \mathcal{U}$ SIC OPERA CHOICE

A novel baptism

Paul Riley on a new adaptation of a book by Gabriel García Márquez



Love and Other Demons

Allison Bell, Nathan Gunn, Mats Almgren, Felicity Palmer, Jean Rigby, Marietta Simpson, Robert Brubaker, John Graham-Hall; Glyndebourne Chorus; London Philharmonic Orchestra/Vladimir Jurowski Glyndebourne GFOCD 020-08 113:15 mins (2 discs)

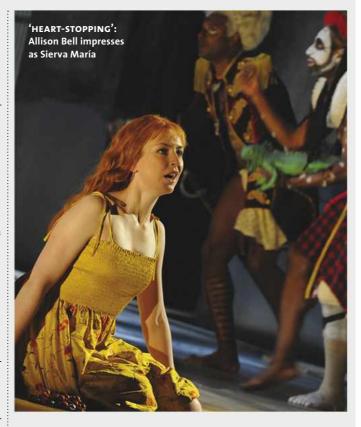
BBC Music Direct £25,99

For a piece set in 18th-century Latin America, dealing with forbidden love, religious fervour and the war between Christianity and paganism, Peter Eötvös's fifth fulllength opera is surprisingly lacking in heat. But the music is brilliantly luminous. His approach to the novella by Gabriel García Márquez on which the Glyndebourne

Eötvös's language references Africa with glittering results

co-commission was based seems inordinately forensic; and although Eötvös conceived a lot of the choral writing first - he enjoyed the luxury of knowing the singers in advance and supposedly wrote to their strengths - much of the text is dispiritingly dogged in its pacing.

The ear is instead drawn to the orchestra, which is divided antiphonally with engaging results. Just as the libretto moves between English, Latin, Spanish and Yoruba, so Eötvös's musical language references Africa as mediated



through the ears of Spanish colonists, Catholic church music and Armenian melisma. But these elements are fused into a glittering score that is clear and precise, wonderfully moulded by Vladimir Jurowski and incandescently played by the LPO in this recording of the premiere performance. Indeed it would be hard to imagine a better 'baptism' for the work. In the pivotal role of Sierva María, soprano Allison Bell invests the stratospheredefying coloratura with heartstopping defiance and pathos, a

telling counterpoint to baritone Nathan Gunn's lyrical Priest whose love for her mirrors Sierva's own 'possession'. Inevitably the recorded balance isn't perfect, but the sound serves an operatic vision that thrives on orchestral energy.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

ON THE WEBSITE

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MOZART

Die Schuldigkeit des Ersten Gebots, K35

Allan Clayton, Andrew Kennedy, Sophie Bevan, Sarah Fox, Cora Burggraaf; Orchestra of Classical Opera/Ian Page Signum Classics SIGCD 343 84:42 mins (2 discs)

BBC Music Direct

£12.99

The Obligation of the First Commandment was composed by Mozart when he was just 11. Though it contains stage directions, Ian Page's notes suggest that any 1767 Salzburg staging would have been rudimentary; think of it, perhaps, as an oratorio as much as sacred opera.

It is certainly sacred. Ignaz Anton von Weiser's libretto shows a half-hearted Christian tempted by Worldliness, though finally brought back into the fold by the cajoling of Divine Mercy and the threats of Divine Justice. Mozart contributed the first section of the three-part work; the remaining parts, by Michael Haydn and Anton Adlgasser, are lost.

Amid much that is merely accomplished, the piece contains genuinely memorable ideas: the howling of the damned described by Christianity in an accompanied recitative is extraordinary.

The piece is performed to a high standard, with tenors Andrew Kennedy and Allan Clayton making the most of the Spirit of Christianity and the Half-Hearted Christian respectively. Soprano Sophie Bevan suggests all the pleasures of Worldliness, and soprano Sarah Fox exemplifies a compassionate Divine Mercy. George Hall PERFORMANCE



PROVENZALE

La Stellidaura vendicante Jennifer Rivera, Carlo Allemano, Adrian Strooper, Enzo Capuano, Hagen Matzeit; Academia Montis Regalis/ Alessandro de Marchi

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 88883703852 163:00 mins (2 discs)

BBC Music Direct

Alessandro de Marchi's brilliant reconstruction of Francesco

Provenzale's *La Stellidaura vendicante* was written for Prince Cicinelli, a minor Neapolitan royal on a mission to impress the Spanish viceroy. Performed at the prince's rented summer palazzo in 1674, its creative director and star was Giulia de Caro: singer, actress, sometime leaseholder on the Teatro San Bartolomeo, and, allegedly, lover of the viceroy and the viceroy's brother.

A love triangle is central to the plot of *La Stellidaura*. Of more interest to the listener is the multiplicity of situations that call for special effects: a sleep aria; a dream in which bloodthirsty saracens rattle their scimitars; birdsong; poisonings and a lowborn character whose dialect and accompaniment – twanging colascione (a long-necked lute), hectic percussion and pithy sopranino recorders – are plundered from the street music of Naples.

The brace of laments for Stellidaura in Act II - 'Chi d'amore lo strale ho in petto' and 'Il cuor del tuo venir la vita aspetta' – attest to the seductive abilities of de Caro and fit Jennifer Rivera's honed, toned mezzo-soprano voice like a glove. Less attractive are her suitors, two stiff baritonal tenors. Bass Enzo Capuano steals the show as the servant Giampetro in 'L'airu chiù d'un cafaruni' (I am as rank as a ram). Tenors aside, De Marchi has created a vibrant reimagining of this private, politically loaded entertainment, and his

BACKGROUND TO...



Peter Eötvös b.1944 Born in Transylvania, Peter Eötvös was just 11 years old when he

showed a cantata he'd written to Ligeti. But it was encountering Stockhausen that proved formative for his music. His early experience as music director in a Budapest theatre also shaped his creative output, which includes the operas *Lady Sarashina* and Angels in America. Theatrical elements find their way into many of his non-dramatic works, and Eötvös has written much film music. He conducts, specialising in 20th-century music, and was at the helm of the inaugural IRCAM concert in 1978.

instrumentalists lavish the score with more detail than perhaps it deserves.

Anna Picard

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





VERD

Otello

Aleksandrs Antonenko, Krassimira Stoyanova, Carlo Guelfi, Barbara di Castri, Juan Francisco Gatell, Michael Spyres, Paolo Battaglia, Eric Owens, David Govertsen; Chicago Symphony Chorus; Chicago Children's Choir; Chicago Symphony Orchestra/ Riccardo Muti

CSO CSOR 901 1301 136:03 mins (2 discs) **BBC Music Direct** £20.99

Verdi's Otello as conducted by Riccardo Muti benefits from tiptop precision from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra players. They reach a level of pristine excellence that any opera house orchestra - no matter how eminent - would struggle to equal. Recorded in Orchestra Hall, Chicago, in April 2011, the wide range and high-definition focus of the sound give highlights such as the opening storm a thrilling sharpness of detail. But with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra comes the Chicago Symphony Chorus, and here an authentic opera house ensemble would have the edge in tonal richness and attack.

Muti's own performance could do with some extra punch, too; it feels slower and less vivid than of yore, as if some of the electrical charge had gone. He performs, incidentally, the later version of the big Act III ensemble. It was rewritten for the opera's Parisian premiere in 1894, seven years after the Italian premiere, and has not widely caught on.

Of the three central vocal performances, soprano Krassimira Stoyanova's Desdemona is the most complete. Despite her Slavic background, her lyric tone sounds convincingly Italianate, while her musicality pays dividends in the Willow Song and Ave Maria.

Tenor Aleksandrs Antonenko's Moor has the power and vigour to survive the demanding title role unscathed, but his approach is more stentorian than searching; rarely are you riven by the depths of Otello's misery. Baritone Carlo Guelfi knows how lago should go, but he sounds past his best, his tone losing firmness and focus. Smaller roles, notably tenor Juan Francisco Gatell's Cassio,

go well; but apart from Stoyanova's contribution, this is not among the leading versions available on disc. *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



WAGNER

Die Walküre

Tomasz Konieczny, Iris Vermillion, Robert Dean Smith, Melanie Diener, Timo Riihonen, Petra Lang, Anja Fidelia, Carola Höhn, Wilke te Brummelstroete, Nicole Piccolomini, Renate Spingler; Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra/ Marek Janowski

PentaTone Classics PTC 5186 407 (CD/ SACD hybrid) 215:21 mins (4 discs)

BBC Music Direct £49.9

Die Walküre, composed immediately after Das Rheingold, shows Wagner writing something unlike anything that had been written before. It is his most tender, wide-ranging and tragic work. There are probably more recordings of it than any of his other dramas, and many of them are very fine. Judged by suitably exalted standards, this new recording in Marek Janowski's complete series doesn't rank as highly as I'd hoped.

The Berlin Radio Symphony
Orchestra is magnificent and
superbly recorded. But Janowski's
conducting is almost always brisk
and sometimes, as at the beginning of
Wotan's Farewell, downright vulgar.
He seems more keen on momentary
excitement than on longterm
emotion. Act I is most successful,
though tenor Robert Dean Smith
is, as always, reliable yet uninspired.
Siegmund's twin sister, Sieglinde, is
taken by soprano Melanie Diener,
the strongest of the cast.

Unfortunately Act II shows a marked decline: Brünnhilde is sung by Petra Lang, until recently an excellent mezzo, but unwisely now taking on the most demanding of heroic soprano roles. Her lower register remains intact, though she doesn't use her voice as intelligently as she used to, while her higher notes are consistently strained, often wobbly. But Thomas Konieczny is the major blot on this landscape: his Wotan sounds gritty, as if it is being sung through clenched teeth, and he fails to impart warmth to his scenes with Brünnhilde. Sad after the high standard of other items in this series. Michael Tanner

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

REISSUES

Reviewed by Christopher Cook

PAER

Leonora

Koszut, Jerusalem, Tadeo, Gruberová, W Brendel, Orth, Van Kesteren; Bayerisches Symphonieorchester/Maag Australian Eloquence 480 4859 (1979) 153-31 mins

BBC Music Direct £14.99 (2 discs)



Paer's is the first version of Bouilly's 'escape opera', heard here in Peter Maag's groundbreaking

recording from 1978. Jerusalem is a noble Florestan and Gruberová outstanding as Marcellina.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

FLOTOW

Martha

Berger, Tegetthoff, Fuchs, Anders, Greindl, Sauer; Chor der Staatsoper Berlin; Staatskapelle Berlin/Schüler *Brilliant Classics* 94681 (1944) 103:23 mins BBC Music Direct £9.99 (2 discs)



Magnificently remastered – you would never guess this tuneful opera was recorded in

Berlin in 1944. Anders leads a fine cast, with Berger a winning Harriet.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

J STRAUSS

Eine Nacht in Venedig

Gedda, Streich, Prey, Rothenberger, Litz, Curzi; Bavarian Radio Symphony Chorus; Graunke Symphony/Allers EMI Classics 6 15 0782 (1968) 95:23 mins 210:33 mins

BBC Music Direct £11.99 (2 discs)



An unusual version of Strauss's sumptuous operetta that borrows material from Karneval in Rom and

Casanova to boost Rothenberger's presence as Constantina.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



LEHÁR

Giuditta

Moser, Gedda, Lindner, Finke, Wewel; Münchner Konzertchor; Münchner Rundfunkorchester/Boskovsky *EMI Classics 6* 15 0902 (1985) 109:13 mins BBC Music Direct £11.99 (2 discs)



With a heroine who is half Carmen and half Manon, *Giudetta* is operetta yearning to be opera. Gedda

is past his best as Octavio; Moser sometimes squally as his Giuditta.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

CHORAL & SONG

Antonio Pappano, Mariss Jansons and Paul McCreesh go head-to-head with new recordings of Britten's War Requiem; Les Arts Florissants thrill with Handel's Belshazzar; plus festive JS Bach

ullet MUSIC CHORAL & SONG CHOICE

Towering Taverner

Kate Bolton finds The Tallis Scholars on top form in their 40th year





TAVERNER

Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas; Magnificats for four, five and six voices

The Tallis Scholars/Peter Phillips Gimell CDGIM 045 79:03 mins £12.99 **BBC** Music Direct

It would be hard to think of a more fitting work to celebrate The Tallis Scholars' 40th anniversary than Taverner's Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas, a towering monument of 16th-century English polyphony that showcases the ensemble's singers, from the soaring sopranos to the sepulchral basses. With its wide-ranging vocal registers and

long-breathed polyphonic lines, the Mass demands an extraordinary degree of virtuosity as well intense concentration and stamina throughout its 40 or so minutes.

This performance is characterised by the Scholars' precision and sheer beauty of sound. The stratospheric

The six-voice setting is a real tour de force with intricate lines

treble line (sung here by female voices) dominates the texture, occasionally at the expense of the lower parts, but the lingering effect is seraphic. For a richer sound, consider The Sixteen on the Helios label, or for a more authentic performance with boy trebles, the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford (Nimbus and Avie).

The CD also includes Taverner's three settings of the Magnificat; the two that survive incomplete have been convincingly reconstructed here. The choral virtuosity does not let up - the six-voice setting, in particular, is a real tour de force with its intricate, spiralling lines. Peter Phillips imbues these readings of Mary's canticle with a responsive mix of joy, reverence and humility, qualities that have characterised his direction through four decades of glorious music making. Kate Bolton

PERFORMANCE

See p30 for James Naughtie's interview with Peter Phillips

ON THE WEBSITE

Hear extracts from this recording and the rest of this month's choices on the BBC Music Magazine website www.classical-music.com



Christmas Oratorio

Katherine Watson (soprano), lestyn Davies (countertenor), James Gilchrist (tenor), Matthew Brook (bass); Trinity College Choir, Cambridge; OAE/Stephen Layton Hyperion CDA 68031/2 151:49 mins (2 discs)

BBC Music Direct

Substantially culled from a couple of earlier secular cantatas, Bach's 1734 present to the churchgoers of Leipzig revels in such elevated recycling that it's not impossible Bach had the Christmas Oratorio at the back of his mind from the very start. Stephen Layton unwraps it with all due festive pomp and circumstance. Part V's 'Ehre sei dir, Gott gesungen' bowls along with irrepressible ebullience, and the majestic opening of Part V is powered by a confident, striding energy. Yet some tempos play a little safe; Layton's measured, wellmanicured approach may exude a quiet authority, but Masaaki Suzuki's lightness of touch and René Jacobs's theatricality give a dash more seasonal sparkle.

Not that the superb quartet of soloists yields so much as a demisemiquaver to the competition. In a work incontestably smitten with the alto voice, Iestyn Davies triumphs, dependably warm and expressively supple. Matthew Brook's resplendent all-guns-blazing 'Grosser Herr' is gilded by David Blackadder's nimble trumpet and, throughout, James Gilchrist's relaxed and lyrical Evangelist maintains the narrative flow. And spurred on by Lisa Beznosiuk's deliciously liquid flute, he also negotiates the agilities of 'Frohe Hirten' with silvery aplomb. Crisp choral singing and exquisite accompaniment, this is a decidedly welcome addition to anyone's Christmas stocking. Paul Riley

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

Britten's War Requiem

Helen Wallace gives her verdict on three new rival releases



BRITTEN

War Requiem

Susan Gritton, John Mark Ainsley, Christopher Maltman; Wrocław Phil Choir; Gabrieli Young Singers Scheme; New College Choir trebles; Gabrieli Consort & Players/Paul McCreesh Winged Lion SIGCD 340 84:05 mins

BRITTEN

War Requiem

Anna Netrebko, Ian Bostridge, Thomas Hampson; Orchestra, Coro e Voci Bianche dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia/Sir Antonio Pappano Warner Classics 615 4482 160:00 mins

BRITTEN

War Requiem

Emily Magee, Mark Padmore, Christian Gerhaher; Tölzer Knabenchor; Bavarian Radio Symphony & Choir/ Mariss lansons

BR Klassik 900120 87:00 mins

After decades in which Britten's own 1963 recording of the War Requiem reigned supreme, a host of fine new recordings now jostle for supremacy. These three new issues all boast top-drawer soloists, well-prepared choirs and dynamic orchestras. So which delivers the most complete experience of this powerful work?

No one has gathered the ideal cast. Antonio Pappano perhaps gets closest. The eloquent Ian Bostridge has that liquid, Pears-ian shimmer in his voice. He delivers 'What

passing bells' in one urgent expressive gesture, and the long-breathed lines of his 'One ever hangs' and 'Strange Meeting' are spellbinding.

Thomas Hampson is strong, but no match for Bostridge in characterisation. Pappano's secret weapon is Anna Netrebko, whose thrilling steel-cored soprano is a match for Galina Vishnevskaya's.

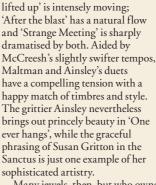
BRITTEN

WAR REQUIEM

For Mariss Jansons, Mark Padmore does not sound in finest voice, though his 'Strange Meeting' is uniquely chilling. His slow-paced 'One ever hangs' has a lame, halting quality, which, though apt, is harder to control. Christian Gerhaher brings his shamanistic focus to key moments like 'After the blast'. He has a way of draining colour from his voice, which makes the sudden flood of tone and volume so effective, but his English is at times peculiarly over-enunciated. Emily Magee is fiery and imperious.

Paul McCreesh's cast includes Christopher Maltman and John Mark Ainsley. Maltman seems to

> me to have that ideal mix of authority and poetry in his approach to the songs, and is articulate without over-emphasising small details. His 'Be slowly



Many jewels, then, but who owns the crown? While Jansons brings a powerful sense of momentum, the very forward, live recording - in the

> Munich Philharmonie – lacks atmosphere, and the Tolz boys are stolid rather than unearthly. Pappano ignites the drama: his opening is truly hushed, his percussion the closest to artillery, his chorus in

the Dies Irae snarls. But there are occasional missed opportunities: in the Sanctus, he doesn't allow the free-rhythmic clamour

time to bloom fully, and tips into the next line too quickly. McCreesh creates a vast crescendo and pauses for an awestruck moment before an incandescent Hosanna, with heartstopping results. The Gabrielis and Wrocław Philharmonic Choir are joined by a host of young voices, and it shows in a choral sound of airy, pure brilliance. His New College choristers have the ideal mix of celestial glow and nimble impatience; his orchestra is wonderfully articulate. And the sound picture has the greatest depth and range of all the recordings. While I wouldn't be without Netrebko and Bostridge, the profundity and coherence of McCreesh's reading sets a new

standard for this work.	
WINGED LION	£11.99
PERFORMANCE	****
RECORDING	****
WARNER CLASSICS	£11.99
PERFORMANCE	****
RECORDING	****
BR KLASSIK	£20.99
PERFORMANCE	****
RECORDING	***



Christmas Oratorio

Agnes Giebel (soprano), Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus (alto), Helmut Krebs (tenor), Walter Hauck (baritone); RIAS Kammerchoir / Karl Ristenpart Audite 21.421 (1950) 155:55 mins (3 discs) £28.99

BBC Music Direct

This recording of Bach's Christmas Oratorio was made in Berlin in 1950. It forms part of an ambitious but sadly never completed project by Karl Ristenpart to record all of Bach's Cantatas for the Berlin Radio (RIAS) in the American sector. The dimensions of the RIAS Chamber Choir and RIAS Boys' Choir are modest for their time but, while they are responsive to text and music, greater pleasure derives from the solo contributions of Charlotte Wolf-Matthäus and Helmut Krebs. The most admired Evangelist of his generation, Krebs's singing is clearly articulated, lyrical and authoritative. Agnès Giebel, at the outset of a distinguished career sounds less favoured by the microphone balance while Walter Hauck inclines towards an over demonstrative declamation.

Ristenpart favoured brisker tempos than his contemporaries. The Part II Sinfonia is faster than any I can recall while the baritone aria 'Grosser Herr' is slower than usual. The soprano/alto aria 'Flösst, mein Heiland' is a shade too brisk, yet the tempo of the alto aria 'Schlafe, mein Liebster' seems ideal. Sound quality, though thin and edgy, is otherwise remarkably clear. Nicholas Anderson

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



St Matthew Passion

Sunhae Im, Christina Roterberg (soprano), Bernarda Fink, Marie-Claude Chappuis (alto), Werner Güra, Topi Lehtipuu, Fabio Trümpy (tenor), Johannes Weisser, Konstantin Wolff, Arttu Kataja (bass); RIAS Kammerchor; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin/ René Jacobs

Harmonia Mundi HMC 802156 58 (hybrid CD/SACD plus DVD) 159:05 mins (3 discs) **BBC Music Direct**

With René Jacobs it's always prudent to expect the unexpected, and this new Matthew Passion doesn't disappoint. Jacobs rejects the traditional 'left-right' stereo disposition of the two choirs and orchestras. Instead, he explores Konrad Küster's theory that Bach intended to consign a small choir and orchestra to the gallery perched high above the entrance to the chancel of the Thomaskirche, and larger forces in the west end gallery - the latter telling the Gospel narrative while the distant musicians offered comment and reflection. The 'spacialisation' is therefore front-back, high-low, large-small and the carefully layered SACD recording comes into its own. Although Jacobs isn't aiming for authenticity, the results are as ear-opening as John Butt's recent CD putting the St John Passion in a liturgical context.

Jacobs brings theatrical flair which takes nothing for granted - from the ever-changing continuo palette underscoring the recitatives, to the inclusion of the lute version of 'Komm susses Kreuz'. Headed by Werner Güra's dynamic Evangelist and Bernarda Fink's beautifully coloured 'Erbarme dich', the solo singing is compelling throughout. The crowd scenes are bloodcurdling, the playing revelatory; only Jacobs's urgency sometimes gets the better of him, torpedoing music (such as the final chorus) that would benefit from a little more room to breath. A major addition to the catalogue nonetheless. Paul Riley



PERFORMANCE

RECORDING

EISLER

Ernste Gesänge; other Lieder Matthias Goerne (baritone), Thomas Larcher (piano); Ensemble Resonanz Harmonia Mundi HMC 902134 54:05 mins

BBC Music Direct £15.99

The Ernste Gesänge, a song cycle for baritone and strings, was the last work Hanns Eisler completed before his untimely death in September 1962. It's a deeply moving testament to the struggles the composer experienced throughout his life in attempting to reconcile his left-wing idealism with the political realities of dictatorship. The songs chart a wide array of emotions which Eisler said proceed 'from a state of consciousness to reflection, depression and revival before returning once again to consciousness', and the musical style

is extremely varied. Passages of a strangely fragile tonal simplicity are juxtaposed with frenzied dissonance.

Matthias Goerne's performance of the *Ernste Gesänge* is mesmerising. Like his great predecessor Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Goerne colours every word with insight and intensity and moulds the melodic line with amazing fluidity. The Ensemble Resonanz follows his every nuance with fantastic precision and brings a breathtaking variety of texture to the spare orchestral accompaniment.

Goerne is equally compelling in a selection of song settings composed in exile in the USA that respond with irony, defiance and resignation to the brutalities inflicted by the Wehrmacht during World War II. Eisler is more capricious in the Piano Sonata Op. 1 which pays homage to his teacher Schoenberg. Thomas Larcher's clear textures does the work proud. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





HANDEL

Belshazzar

Allan Clayton (tenor), Rosemary Joshua (soprano), Caitlin Hulcup (mezzosoprano), lestyn Davies (countertenor), Jonathan Lemalu (bass-baritone); Les Arts Florissants/William Christie Les Arts Florissants Editions AF 001 165:00 mins (3 discs)

BBC Music Direct £32.99

Have we grown too comfortable with Handel? The first release from William Christie's own label, Editions Les Arts Florissants, suggests we have. Here is an orchestral sound of defiant grandeur, expressive and uninhibited choral singing, an energy suggestive of live performance, and a quirky balance that highlights a sinuous viola line here, a pop of bassoon there. Christie's reading of Handel's 1745 oratorio, in a version incorporating material prepared for its 1751 revival, is more theatrical than a good many recent opera recordings, with a vivid timbral and dynamic range.

There is more than a hint of the Hollywood epic to Handel's score: the chaste restraint of the Chorus of Jews, the boozy hedonism of the hard-partying Babylonians, the flinty figures that trace the writing on the wall. Allan Clayton is suitably reckless as the orgy-loving, polytheistic despot. Iestyn Davies is poised and pure-toned as the prophet

Daniel in the cantorial melismas of Act II. Jonathan Lemalu's Garrick Club diction spices up the role of Gobrias, while Caitlin Hulcup is a forthright, attractive Cyrus and Rosemary Joshua navigates Nitocris's spiritual and emotional journey exquisitely. Christie's Francophone choir has been well coached, with only a fractional sagging of pitch in the a capella sections. The 'as live' quality is not blemish free, but the whole is so dynamic as to raise the Handelian bar. Anna Picard

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





VERD

Requiem

Anja Harteros (soprano), Elina Garanča (mezzo-soprano), Jonas Kaufmann (tenor), René Pape (bass); Orchestra e Coro del Teatro alla Scala/Daniel Barenboim Decca 478 5245 85:59 mins (2 discs)

BBC Music Direct

Recorded at La Scala in August 2012, Daniel Barenboim's live Verdi Requiem benefits from a spacious recording that allows the intimate detail of the music to register, as well as the grandeur of its largest gestures.

From the slow and solemn opening, too, Barenboim's interpretative view is grand in conception, with the La Scala performers offering him sufficient depth and richness of tone to paint the piece with a huge palette of colours. He's responsive to its harmonic contours, though occasionally there's a dearth of momentum – 'Te decet hymnus' in the opening section, for instance – while the dancing notes of the Sanctus are not always neat.

But the four soloists form a quartet finely balanced in vocal weight and proficiency. Anja Harteros's soprano combines ethereality with substance, resulting in subtly coloured expressivity. Elina Garanča's mezzo feels perfectly scaled to the music. Jonas Kaufmann combines complete technical mastery with vivid tonal variety and commitment to the text; it is this personal quality that bass René Pape lacks, though his vocalism is delivered on an equally empowered scale to that of his colleagues. Though it doesn't outdo Antonio Pappano's recent recording, this is an impressive account. George Hall

PERFOMANCE RECORDING

REISSUES

Reviewed by Paul Riley

JS BACH

St Matthew Passion

De Mey, Kooy, Schlick, Prégardien, etc; Netherlands Bach Society; Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra/Koopma Apex 2564 64675-1 (1993) 164-43 mins BBC Music Direct £9.99 (3 discs)



This earliest of Koopman's three recordings of the Matthew Passion is a precisely managed

affair: elegantly sung and played with consummate refinement.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



JS BACH

St Matthew Passion

Seefried, Ferrier, Ludwig, Edelmann; Vienna Symphony Orchestra/Karajan Major Classics M3CD302 208:53 mins BBC Music Direct £6.99 (3 discs)



The last two tracks seem to be inverted, and choir and orchestra sometimes sound like tankers

trying to dock in heavy seas, but
Ferrier brings a redeeming nobility.
PERFORMANCE

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

*

HANDEL

Messiah

Schlick, Piau, Scholl, Padmore, Berg; Les Arts Florissants/William Christie Harmonia Mundi Gold HMG 501498.99 (1994) 142:40 mins

BBC Music Direct £14.99 (2 discs)



Christie negotiates both the wide-eyed wonderment of the Nativity and the pathos of Part II

with aplomb in a performance underpinned by luxury casting and instrumental finesse.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING ****

HANDEL

Jephtha

Ainsley, George, Denley, Oelze, Köhler, Gooding; Rias Kammerchor; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin/Marcus Creed Brilliant Classics 94668 (1994) 160:07 mins

BBC Music Direct £10.99 (3 discs)



Recorded four years after John Eliot Gardiner's dramatic Göttingen Festival performance, Marcus

Creed's purposeful account slightly airbrushes the anguished horrors of Handel's oratorio swansong.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING ****







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CHAMBER

Listen out for arresting Arensky from the Goldner String Quartet; an outstanding recital of British works for cello and piano from Huw and Paul Watkins; plus superlative Schubert from the Pavel Haas Quartet

$lue{m}\mathcal{U}$ SIC CHAMBER CHOICE

Fantasticus heads to France

This album of Baroque chamber works is a triumph, says *Paul Riley*





SONNERIE & OTHER PORTRAITS

Works by Marais, Rameau, Francoeur, Leclair, Duphly & Dornel

Fantasticus Resonus RES 10122 71:06 mins Download only: www.resonusclassics.com

After exploring the 17th-century stylus fantasticus (see review on p77), the ensemble Fantasticus proves its versatility by triumphantly embracing the French Baroque. This programme features repertoire rich in musical portraits: Marais salutes Lully in his Tombeau

pour Monsr de Lully, Rameau salutes Marais in his Cinquième concert, and there's a stampede to salute Antoine and Jean-Baptiste Forqueray (father and son). Among those bending the knee to 'La Forcroy', Dornel's Sonata IV (1711)

Fantasticus are a white-hot addition to the early music scene

supplies an imposing Chaconne to round out the programme with infectious Gallic flair.

But it's not all composer portraits. Fantasticus opens with a jaunty account of Marais's lively depiction of the bells of Ste Geneviève du Mont-de-Paris, and there's a wonderfully tender coquetry to Rameau's La cupis – a portrait, perhaps, of one of the dancers who

had graced the premiere of his Hippolyte et Aricie.

There are opportunities for each member of the ensemble to shine, including gambist Robert Smith's plaintive expressive poise in Marais's Le tombeau de Lully, harpsichordist Guillermo Brachetta's supple gravitas in Duphly's Le Forqueray, and Rie Kimura's elegantly turned bravura in the Francoeur Violin Sonata. With their first two releases, Fantasticus have established themselves as a white-hot addition to the early music scene. Fantasticus by name; fantastic by nature!

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

ON THE WEBSITE

ON THE WEDGILE
Hear extracts from this recording and the rest of this month's choices on the BBC Music Magazine website www.classical-music.com



ARENSKY

Piano Quintet in D, Op. 51 **TANEYEV**

Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 30 Piers Lane (piano); Goldner String Quartet Hyperion CDA 67965 68:37 mins **BBC Music Direct** £12.99

Both these works have been recorded several times, with Martha Argerich releasing them on separate albums in her Lugano series. That they remain hardly known by most music lovers is a pity, especially given the genial and ear-catching quality of the Arensky.

Particularly characteristic is the second movement's set of variations on a poignant theme, an ancient French wedding song which sounds almost as if it could be Tchaikovsky. Then follows an enchanting Scherzo, a sun-filled and carefree dance in which pianist Piers Lane's lightfingered ascents and rapid scalic plunges are perfectly complemented by the Goldners' feather-light string playing. The only disappointment is the all too sketchy finale, its 'in modo antico' opening followed by a recap of the first movement's theme - all in less than three-and-a-half minutes.

Taneyev's Quintet, lasting just short of 45 minutes, justifies its length with a sure sense of structure, inventive instrumental colour and contrapuntal skill. Still, I'm not sure it works as the disc's opening item: it's a weighty work, not helped by this rather straight performance. There is more charisma in the excellent account by Mikhail Pletnev and a dream team of string players (on DG 477 5419), who reveal the drama of this epic work. Daniel Jaffé PERFORMANCE (TANEYEV) (ARENSKY)



RECORDING

HANDEL

Trio Sonatas, Op. 2; Passacaglia The Brook Street Band Avie AV2282 69:49 mins £14.99

BBC Music Direct

Handel's Op. 2 set of 'Sonatas or Trios for Two Violins, Flutes, or Hoboys with a Thorough bass for the Harpsichord or Violoncello' were compiled from earlier sources. Listen to the second Sonata and you might fancy you hear an echo of *Acis and Galatea*. But this wistful *Sonata da chiesa* was composed when Handel was only 14 years old, long before he was drawn to the musical glories of Italy.

Though the publisher was aiming at the lucrative market of amateur players, a more common setting for performance would have been the pleasure gardens of London. Here, violinists Rachel Harris and Farran Scott, recorder player and flautist Lisete da Silva, cellist Tatty Theo and harpsichordist Carolyn Gibley demurely coax the music back indoors, while retaining just a hint of the bosky night air. There is a postcard from Venice in the liquid Largo of the first Sonata (plundered from Agrippina), and several nods to Handel's former patron, the Duke of Chandos. It's a sweet-tempered, well ordered performance. But a hint of heavier perfume wouldn't have gone amiss. Anna Picard

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





JANÁČEK

String Quartets Nos 1 & 2
Arcadia Quartet
Orchid Classics ORC100036 43:18 mins
BBC Music Direct £12.9

Written toward the end of his life, when Janáček was in the throes of an intense but unrequited love affair, Janáček's two String Quartets distill many of the passions found in his last four operas. The First Quartet (1923) takes its inspiration from Tolstoy's novella, The Kreutzer Sonata, in Janáček's own words the tale of a 'woman, tormented and beaten down'. The Second Quartet (1928), entitled 'Intimate Letters', was an explicit chronicle of his love for Kamila Stösslová. Not only do both Quartets set formidable technical challenges, they require astonishing emotional commitment and dramatic timing.

Winners of the Wigmore Hall's 2012 International String Quartet Competition, the Romanian Arcadia Quartet certainly have the measure of the dramatic aspects of these remarkable works. The opening of the First Quartet is arresting; elsewhere, however, the playing, though always beautiful in tone, seems routine. Too often,



a high dynamic takes the place of passionate communication.

There is more nuance and intensity in their performance of the Second Quartet, but the players' evident engagement is not helped by a close recorded sound. It's a pity, since the second movement has a rapt, almost visionary quality. While there is much to enjoy here, a lack of reflection and the recorded sound leaves this issue a long way behind the Skampa Quartet on Supraphon (SU40032). Jan Smaczny

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





SCHUBERT

String Quartet No. 14 in D minor; String Quintet in C
Pavel Haas Quartet;
Danjulo Ishizaka (cello)
Supraphon SU4110-2 91:42 mins (2 discs)
BBC Music Direct £20.99

The Pavel Haas Quartet is still a young ensemble, but here they give great performances of two of the most demanding works in the repertoire. Schubert, even at his greatest, is not usually credited with plumbing the depths that Beethoven reached in his late Quartets, but I wonder about that. No music expresses greater pain than Schubert's, though in Beethoven, as in Bach, there is sometimes a sense that even the worst sufferings can be transcended. Schubert didn't allow himself that comfort, so the best

he can do to counter his pain is to keep moving. Hence those frenetic perpetual motion finales in so many of his later works.

The Pavel Haas Quartet, with the superb extra cellist Danjulo Ishizaka, even succeed where most other ensembles fail, making the last movement of the String Quintet into something that seems a fitting conclusion to a work whose first three movements are unquestionably supreme. Marked allegretto, they take the movement faster than that, though their tempos are flexible. For the strange passages of bewilderment they relax the tempo, but not the intensity. Neither the Quintet nor their Death and the Maiden makes comfortable listening, but none of the greatest Schubert does. It's essential listening for anyone who loves Schubert. Michael Tanner

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



VIVALDI

The Four Seasons; plus opera transcriptions

Richard Galliano (accordion); Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjabédian, Sébastien Surel (violin), Jean-Marc Apap (viola), Eric Levionnois (cello), Stéphane Logerot (double bass) Deutsche Grammophon 481 0350 47-34 mins

BBC Music Direct

Among more than a thousand recordings of Vivaldi's Four Seasons

are arrangements for Chinese pipa and Japanese koto, shred, surf and tango guitars, sarangi and synthesizer. There are jazz, hiphop, acid rock and reggae versions, and performances by The Swingle Singers, Nigel Kennedy, Jacques Loussier and Vanessa Mae. French accordion player Richard Galliano - best known for his playing of jazz, tango and Nino Rota, though no stranger to Baroque music – is the latest to cast new light on these infinitely flexible concertos in this slimmed-down arrangement for accordion and a quintet of strings.

Galliano plays with effortless virtuosity, his phrasing pliant and free, responsive to the music's inherent drama. He draws a range of colours and timbres, suggesting here the violin, there a flute or reedy oboe, and even the chill winds of the Venetian scirocco gust through the first movement of 'Winter'. The accordion lacks the flamboyancy and expressivity of the violin, and the homogeneity of a string ensemble is inevitably lost in this version, but Galliano's sensitive, committed playing makes this performance far more than mere gimmickry.

Alongside the Seasons are arrangements of four arias from Vivaldi's operas, played with plaintive poetry. Their transparent, lyrical lines transcribe effectively to the accordion, though they sound more like Parisian café music than Venetian Baroque opera. Kate Bolton PERFORMANCE



RECORDING

BRITISH WORKS FOR CELLO & PIANO, VOL. 2

Sonatas by Bowen, Bax and Ireland
Paul Watkins (cello),
Huw Watkins (piano)
Chandos CHAN 10792 75:28 mins
BBC Music Direct £12.99

If I were the sheep staring out so placidly on this CD's cover, I'd be soon off scurrying to safety after the opening piano chords of York Bowen's Cello Sonata. Clamorous, bell-like, they make an attention-grabbing start to this wholly welcome second volume in Chandos's delectable series. None of the selections, each premiered by the distinguished cellist Beatrice Harrison, takes us far from the rhapsodic norm expected of British chamber music in the early 1920s.

£13.99

But none wilt or dribble, either: the Bowen, in particular, is such a grandiloquently vigorous piece. Huw Watkins tackles the assertive piano part with his customary force, while brother Paul is the perfect counterweight, burning with steady lyricism through the cello's long singing lines.

There is nothing timid about their music-making in the more compact Ireland Sonata (by turns restless, easeful, and rollicking), or the fiery Bax, where the recording's depth and breadth bring special rewards in the volatile first movement and the rapturous lento. Just occasionally, however, it's possible to wish for more unbuttoned, less mellifluous feelings from the cello. Even so, bathed in Chandos splendour, the Watkins brothers remain by far the best recorded guides to this powerful and enjoyable repertoire. Geoff Brown ****

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



FANTASTICUS: BAROOUE CHAMBER WORKS

Buxtehude, Stradella, Mealli, Schelzer, Bertali, Muffat & Jenkins **Fantasticus**

Resonus RES10112 (2012) 66:38 mins

Download only: resonusclassics.com

When Amsterdam-based Fantasticus made this first recording for Resonus last year it lived up to its name with a programme exploring the 17th-century 'stylus Fantasticus' - a style described by one theorist as 'instituted to display genius and teach the hidden design of harmony'. Here was a group in thrilling harmony with itself, and with genius to spare. Ensemble is laser-sharp and the music-making oozes insight and vitality. From the swaying stateliness of the variations animating Pandolfi Mealli's Sonata *La castella* to double helpings of supremely debonair Buxtehude, the sheer freshness and fiery joie de vivre of the playing recalls the young Andrew Manze and his collaborators. Each instrument bags its moment in the spotlight, with Robert Smith's thrilling visceral yet expressive account of the gamba Sonatina by Augustinus Kertzinger shining particularly bright. Paul Riley PERFORMANCE ****

RECORDING

See this month's Chamber Choice for Fantasticus's latest release

REISSUES

Reviewed by Erik Levi

HINDEMITH

Kleine Kammermusik; Clarinet Quintet etc Valerius Ensemble

Brilliant Classics 9447 (2005) 66:32 mins **BBC Music Direct**



This enterprising survey includes iconoclastic works such as the Clarinet Quintet and neo-

classical Kleine Kammermusik. Energetic playing and clear sound. PERFORMANCE **** RECORDING ****

TCHAIKOVSKY

Complete music for string quartet Shostakovich Quartet Alto ALC 2024 (1970s) 141:36 mins BBC Music Direct



Despite some finely honed playing, the constricted dynamic range of these 1970s Soviet recordings

diminishes the emotional impact, especially in Quartet No. 3.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING

£6.99

SCHUBERT

Octet, D803; Quartettsatz, D703; Viennese Dances

Vienna Octet; Tokyo Quartet; Willi Boskovsky Ensemble Alto ALC 1227 (1958) 74:57 mins **BBC Music Direct**



The Vienna Octet's Schubert has wonderful charm and still sounds remarkably vivid.

Equally enticing are the elegantly performed set of Dances and a forceful Quartettsatz.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



LA CLARINETTE A L'OPERA

Fantasias on works by Mascagni, Rossini, Puccini, Bellini & Verdi Alessandro Carbonare (clarinet), Andrea Dindo (piano) Harmonia Mundi HMA 1951722 (2001) 52-50 mins



BBC Music Direct

Mugely entertaining Italian opera transcriptions are projected with great panache and jaw-

dropping virtuosity by Carbonare. Bassi's Sonnambula Paraphrase is a particular delight.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



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INSTRUMENTAL

Rafał Blechacz sheds fresh light on Chopin's Polonaises; Inon Barnatan gives an astonishing recital of the late Schubert Sonatas; plus a Diabelli double bill from András Schiff

$lue{m}$ \mathcal{M} SIC INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

Made for Mozart

Erik Levi welcomes Christian Blackshaw's Sonata recital



MOZART

Piano Sonatas, Vol. 1: Nos 1, 2, 8, 9 & 17 Christian Blackshaw (piano) Wigmore Hall Live WHLive 0061/2 93.02 mins

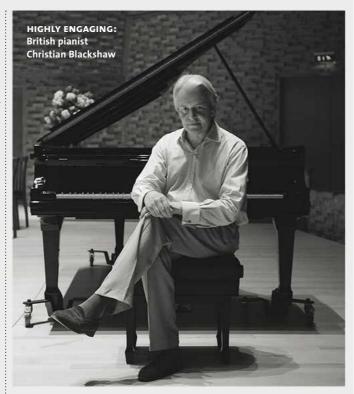
BBC Music Direct

£15.99

Christian Blackshaw's Mozart Piano Sonata Series at Wigmore Hall garnered a unanimously positive response from London's critics. So it seems entirely appropriate that these performances should now be made available to a wider audience. Certainly the first volume proves to be a completely engaging experience. Although Blackshaw's playing operates within a deliberately restricted dynamic range, perhaps acknowledging

Blackshaw plays with razor-sharp clarity and great exuberance

the gentler sonorities of the early keyboard for which these works were originally written, the sound he extracts from the modern piano is subtle and astonishingly varied. In the slow movements, Blackshaw's velvety tone and fluid control of rubato perfectly encapsulate the intimacy and longing of Mozart's cantabile melodies. At the opposite end of the emotional spectrum, his articulation in the fast outer movements has razor-sharp clarity as well as great energy and exuberance.



Without doubt, the most impressive feature of Blackshaw's interpretations is the way in which he varies the character of these essentially didactic pieces. In the first disc, for example, it's instructive to compare his approach to the opening movements of the C major (K279), F major (K280) and D major (K311) Sonatas. Although each work shares common stylistic fingerprints, Blackshaw never takes these gestures for granted, making us listen afresh to every nuance and sharing with us his delight at the composer's unexpected twists

and turns of harmony. Just as impressive is the British pianist's superbly dramatic account of the A minor Sonata (K310). The outer movements are bold and fiery but without any harshness of tone, while Blackshaw is magical in the wistful melancholy of the central Andante cantabile movement.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



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BEETHOVEN

Sonata No. 32, Op. 111; Diabelli Variations, Op. 120; Bagatelles, Op. 126 András Schiff (piano) ECM New Series ECM 4810446

148:55 mins (2 discs) **BBC Music Direct**

£28.99

On these two discs, we get Beethoven's Diabelli Variations twice - played on an 1820 Brodmann fortepiano and on a Bechstein piano built a century later. They also include the last Sonata Op. 111 on the piano, and Beethoven's final keyboard work, the Bagatelles Op. 126 on the fortepiano. András Schiff's passion for this music, and his ability to communicate it, is apparent in every bar. In the excellent booklet he mounts an attack on the Steinway sound, a rich rounded tone he thinks Beethoven would have loathed. The two instruments he plays each have a lean tone and the interpretation of the Diabellis doesn't alter much. Played on the Bechstein. the work's close relationship to Op. 111, which immediately precedes it on the disc is obvious, especially in the filigree high writing for the right hand. The dynamic range is smaller than it would be on a Steinway, but Schiff still manages the most violent contrasts of texture and harmony, finally reaching the elegant bliss of the closing minuet, one of Beethoven's most miraculous inventions.

The fortepiano, with its range of pedals, has a resonant bass, leathery tone and a much dinkier treble. The central part of the keyboard is not that different from the Bechstein. The Brodmann is perfect for those rollicking last Bagatelles, and the insouciance here is comparable to that of the last movement of the String Quartet Op. 130 (the movement he wrote to replace what now stands alone as the Grosse Fuge).



Schiff's playing is almost ideal, apart from his tendency to spread the chords and to play the left hand shortly before the right. Michael Tanner

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





Two Polonaises, Op. 26; Two Polonaises, Op. 40; Polonaise in F sharp minor, Op. 44; Polonaise in A flat major, Op. 53; Polonaise-Fantasie, Op. 61

Rafał Blechacz (piano) Deutsche Grammophon 479 0928 59:47 mins

BBC Music Direct

As a first-prize winner in Warsaw's Chopin Competition, the famous contest that has a better track record than any other in identifying major talent, Rafał Blechacz (class of 2005) certainly has something to say about Chopin. Much of this new release is exhilarating - while some wallto-wall recordings of the Polonaises can get a little wearying in their pomp and circumstance, Blechacz plays with freshness and verve. He understands instinctively how Chopin elevates the traditional Polish dance into a national statement, with a sound that is both proudly majestic

Displaying a brilliantly secure technique, the young Polish pianist is fully up to the challenges of these

and melancholy.

glittering pieces. He also feels the nostalgia and longing of the music, and hearing him play the Polonaises is like hearing an authentically Viennese performance of a waltz, with plenty of air in those idiomatic hesitations. The A flat Op. 53 is every bit as fiery as its 'Heroic' title suggests, while the haunting C minor work, Op. 40 No. 2, is full of restless spirit. So it is a pity that Blechacz seems overawed by the great Polonaise-Fantasy, Chopin's last extended work for solo piano. True, it requires a higher degree of interpretative subjectivity than almost any other Chopin piece, yet Blechacz sounds as if he still needs to find his way through all its twists and turns. John Allison

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





Suite in D minor, HWV 428; Suite in F, HWV 427; Suite in G minor, HWV 432 **MOZART**

Allemande from Suite 'Dans le style de GF Haendel', K399 Daria van den Bercken (piano)

Sony Classical 88765418832 67:56 mins

BBC Music Direct

£14.99

For more than 30 years the Sviatoslav Richter-Andrei Gavrilov recording of Handel's Great Suites has pretty

much had the field to itself when it comes to performing Handel on the piano. Belatedly, though, the competition is stirring. Lisa Smirnova's 2011 ECM recording (reviewed January 2012) balanced dazzling pianism with furtive nods to period practice; now Daria van den Bercken enters the fray. She might not quite posses Smirnov's scintillating playfulness, even if the F major Suite's first Allegro has sparkle to spare, but there's a quiet, tasteful authority that impresses. Indeed, the F major Suite is a conspicuous success, the opening Adagio a limpid, translucent soliloquy, the concluding fugue engagingly innocent and candid. And it's artfully placed between two imposing minor-key Suites, affording respite from the glowering clash of the Titans.

Van den Bercken's well-judged sense of fantasy sets the D minor winsomely on its way but the Presto finale is a little sober, while the G minor Suite (the bruiser of the set!) is problematic - the French Ouverture is a touch prosaic while its concluding Passacaille is rather ponderous. Three postscripts include a G major Chaconne despatched with deliciously fleet fingerwork; while, to finish, Mozart pulls on his best Handelian bib and tucker for a spot of intriguing pastiche in an Allemande. Paul Riley

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



Sonata in B minor; Mephisto Waltz No. 1; Sonetti del Petrarca from Années de pèlerinage - deuxième année: Italie; Etude No. 3 'La campanella' from Grandes études de Paganini

Alexei Grynyuk (piano) Orchid Classics ORC 100031 67:54 mins **BBC Music Direct** £12.99

'One must not imprint on music a balanced uniformity, but kindle it, or slow it down, according to its meaning', said Liszt. This, of course, begs the question of how a pianist discovers that meaning, always assuming there is indeed one single meaning, rather than several. (For the listener, I would suggest it comes down to whether a performance produces smiles of pleasure or sighs of irritation.) In this instance, all I can say is that Grynyuk's rhythmic practices seem to spring unaided from the musical

discourse: extended note values are justified by dreamy textures, while sharp contrasts spring from the demonic Liszt's love of surprise.

Two features are paramount in this marvellous recital: a feeling for form, and some of the most sheerly beautiful piano tone I've heard in a long while (for which producer Andrew Keener and recording engineer Phil Rowlands may take their share of praise). As an instance of formal understanding, the opening downward scale of the Sonata is rhythmically loose at this first appearance, but when it returns at the end of the work, it's more controlled, now rethought in the light of what the Sonata has had to say. Add to this a supreme technical virtuosity, not least in Grynyuk's multiple shades of dynamics between p and ppp, and we find here an artist to rank with the very best. His performance of La campanella is not only breathtaking in its control but imbued with elegance and a huge sense of fun. Roger Nichols

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



MIYOSHI

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Sonate pour piano; Chaînes: Préludes pour piano; En vers; Pour le piano - mouvement circulaire et croisé

Yukiko Kojima (piano)

Odradek ODRCD 306 68:09 mins

BBC Music Direct Akira Miyoshi was 80 in 2013. Like his close contemporary Takemitsu, he studied in France and was profoundly influenced by the French post-Impressionist repertoire, citing Messiaen and Dutilleux as important influences. Unlike Takemitsu's, his music is often active and flamboyant rather than contemplative, even in the early Piano Sonata (1958) which is as much post-Scriabinesque as Francophone and has a dynamic toccata-finale. The major work here is Chaînes (1973), a three-movement assemblage of 24 'preludes' or fragments, kaleidoscopic in character and often dramatic in gesture; but they often reflect or invoke each other, the music turning back on itself, underlining Miyoshi's fascination with circularity and mirroring in musical form. En vers (1980) is more of a poetic miniature, though rising to a big climax, while Pour le piano - mouvement

circulaire et croisé (1995-8) seems to



The golden age of the organ

CD Review's **Andrew McGregor** explores a set of André Isoir's landmark recordings from the 1970s

André Isoir offers

powerful testimony

to a vital tradition



'Le livre d'or de l'orgue Français' (La Dolce Volta LDV 147.2; 6 CDs) translates literally as 'The Golden

Age of the French Organ', but in French a *livre d'or* is also a guestbook, where a distinguished visitor might be asked to leave an impression or testimony. Organist André Isoir's ambition was to offer an anthology of French organ music from the Renaissance to the 20th century over 24 LPs on the Calliope label. Twenty of

these ended up testifying to the importance of a still underappreciated period: the French

Classical organ tradition in the 17th and 18th centuries, from the birth of Jehan Titelouze – the first French organ composer – in 1563, to the death of Pierre du Mage almost 200 years later. These are the recordings remastered and reissued in this handsome edition.

They coincide with the reigns of Louis XIII and XIV, and a time when the resonance of plainchant was mingling with the possibilities of colour, timbre and power that a new generation of organ builders was providing. When Isoir made these recordings in the 1970s, at the start of the

French organ revival, he had to make do with what was available to him to play. As he points out in the notes, there were far fewer appropriately restored organs then than today, so choices of stops and registration were critical. One of the joys here is the range, contrast and character of the sounds, from the powerful reeds of the modern instrument in St-Germain-des-Prés, Paris, to the spicier temperament of the Clicquot organ in Houdan. One of the few whose tuning hadn't been modernised, it allows gloriously

tangy stop combinations

Some names will be more familiar: François Couperin, who

with Nicolas de Grigny raised the organ aesthetic to new heights, bringing the brilliance and theatrical flair of the harpsichord repertoire to the liturgical world of the organ mass. Isoir's instincts still feel good: I enjoyed his fluent ornamentation, the clarity of his choice of registration, and the sheer delight he obviously feels in some of the sounds he's discovered on these eight instruments. The recordings themselves are excellent, and even today Isoir offers powerful testimony to a vital tradition. **BBC Music Direct**

be a work of memory, meditating on a lifetime's involvement with the instrument. In all of them there is a sense of connection to the act of breathing, defining the length and shapes of phrases.

I really enjoyed this disc. Miyoshi's is distinguished, inventive and continuously stimulating music, full of beauty and colour and with a marvellous sensitivity to the full range of keyboard sonority and resonance (and indeed, silence). Yukiko Kojima's stunning virtuosity is clearly allied to a deep insight into the works themselves. Calum MacDonald

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PERFORMANCE RECORDING



SCHUBER

Piano Sonatas in C minor and A major, D958 & D959; Impromptu in G flat, D899 No. 3 Inon Barnatan (piano) Avie AV 2283 72:04 mins BBC Music Direct £14.99

This is superior playing, in which penetrating musicianship, compelling interpretative insight and elegant pianism achieve a nearperfect equilibrium. That said, two questions arise, neither prompting a definitive answer. Elegance and perfect equilibrium are cherishable virtues, and as such can only be welcomed. But are they compatible with the tormented darkness, indeed the well-documented emotional violence, of a dying 31 year-old, whose mental instability brought him to the very edge of reason (witness the hallucinatory nightmare that erupts in the Andantino of the Sonata in A, D959)? And is equilibrium a desirable result in the angry, tragic rhetoric of the first movement of Sonata in C minor, D958, which lurches from one mood to another?

Schubert's violence is different from Beethoven's, but none the less shocking for that. Schubert the lyricist, the supreme writer for the voice, is just as capable of angularity as his great mentor, juxtaposing unprecedented contrasts with unsettling suddenness. Mightily impressive as he is in the big-boned, Beethovenian struggle (particularly in the first movement of the C minor Sonata), Inon Barnatan is even more powerful in the creepy, serpentine, *pianissimo* slitherings that threaten to undermine the

prevailing resolve. The playing is so consistently excellent that it feels churlish to complain – and complaining I'm not. The suppleness of phrase, the harmonic balances, the exquisite colouring, the choice of tempos, all these are just some of the virtues which abound here. If I have one hovering reservation about the recital as a whole, it's that the playing is perhaps too consistently beautiful. I can think of worse faults. *Ieremy Siepmann*

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



SCHUMANN

Waldszenen, Op. 82; Piano Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 22; Gesänge der Frühe, Op. 133 Mitsuko Uchida (piano)

Mitsuko Uchida (piano) Decca 478 5393 59:15 mins BBC Music Direct

£13.99

This is Mitsuko Uchida's third Schumann disc, featuring some of his lesser-known piano works. She has said that he is the most difficult of composers to play, because he was no great pianist himself. Quite apart from that, it must be hard to know what to do with a movement that is directed to be played 'as fast as possible', followed a few pages later by 'faster' and a few after that by 'faster still'. Those are the instructions for the second piece on the disc, the G minor Sonata (completed in 1838). It's a passionate rhapsodic work, not of great distinction, but ardent. And Uchida's technique is certainly up to any challenge.

The framing pieces are from very late in Schumann's career, shortly before his final mental collapse in the 1850s. The first Waldszenen – Forest Scenes – of 1849 has three hunting movements, the third of which is strikingly like the Ride of the Valkyries, though neither Wagner nor Schumann could have known the other's work. The last work, Gesänge der Frühe – Songs of Dawn – is very late (from 1853), and though it has lovely things, it is not to be ranked with the greatest Schumann.

Uchida makes a strong case for works she clearly loves, but I found the overall impression of the recording rather depressing because for all the ardour of her advocacy, the programme does show a great composer in decline.

Michael Tanner
PERFORMANCE
RECORDING





MENAHEM PRESSLER

Beethoven: Piano Sonata No. 31; Schubert: Piano Sonata No. 21; Chopin: Nocturne in C sharp minor Menahem Pressler (piano) BIS BIS-1999 (hybrid CD/SACD) 70:33 mins

MENAHEM PRESSLER

Schubert: Piano Sonata No. 18; Mozart: Rondo in A minor, K511; Beethoven: Bagatelles, Op. 126

Menahem Pressler (piano) La Dolce Volta LDV 12 74:56 mins

BBC Music Direct BBC Music Direct £12.99 £15.99

Menahem Pressler turns 90 in December 2013. The career of the Beaux Arts Trio's erstwhile pianist is beginning to resemble that of the great Mieczysław Horszowski: like him, Pressler has devoted most of his professional life to chamber music and teaching, turning to solo performance in earnest only in his advancing years. He has always had an unmistakable sound: sparkling, limpid and full of wit and wisdom. The good news is that it is still there; and though the fingers do not always move as smoothly as they once did, spending a lifetime with the piano masterpieces pays its own dividends.

The programme on the BIS disc, with superb SACD sound, is ideal for him: late Beethoven in the form of Sonata Op. 110 and Schubert's last Piano Sonata, D960 in B flat, plus a touching Chopin Nocturne. The cushioned clarity of Pressler's tone suits all this wonderfully and his direct phrasing gets straight to the point. In this hallowed repertoire, spare in language and compassionate in concept, Pressler's occasional vulnerability even adds an extra layer of humanity.

On La Dolce Volta, Pressler performs Schubert's Sonata D894 alongside the Mozart A minor Rondo and Beethoven's Op. 126 Bagatelles. Here it is the Beethoven that really turns up trumps – whimsical slivers of imagination that make a swift impression without time for energy to flag. This Schubert, though, sometimes feels just too laboured to take wing, especially in the finale. The CDs may not be perfect, but are valuable documents. If only he had recorded more of the solo repertoire years ago. *Jessica Duchen*

BIS: PERFORMANCE RECORDING LDV: PERFORMANCE RECORDING



REISSUES

Reviewed by Rob Ainsley

THE ESSENTIAL JULIAN BREAM

Works by Rodrigo, Vivaldi, Handel, Villa-Lobos, Boccherini and others Julian Bream (lute and guitar) RCA Red Seal 88883746962 81:28 mins (2 discs) BBC Music Direct £15.99



Bream's sampler shows his passionate best. The (complete) *Aranjuez* Concerto is unsurpassed; Falla's

Miller's Dance blazes; 'impossible' Rodrigo dazzles.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



SPANISH GUITAR ENCORES

Works by Myers, Tárrega, Albéniz, Sanz, Brouwer, Mangoré and Villa-Lobos Söllscher, Yepes (guitars) Deutsche Grammophon 478 4224 69:18 mins BBC Music Direct £8.99



Söllscher impresses in DG's chocolatebox selection of standards; Yepes less so (dodgy

Asturias). But a pleasant enough popular recital.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



THE LEGEND OF ALIRIO DIAZ, VOL. 1

Works by Frescobaldi, Scarlatti, Sanz, Bach, Sor, Haydn, Albéniz and others Alirio Diaz (guitar) IDIS 6661 (1956/60) 80:00 mins Available from prestoclassical.co.uk



The 27 familiar miniatures in Diaz's exciting studio performances circa 1960 are slightly

marred by chip-shop acoustic and occasional intrusive fades.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



SCARLATTI

Sonatas

Belder (harpsichord), Carbonara (piano), Attademo (guitar) etc Brilliant Classics 94613 (1997-2009) 321:10 mins (5 discs) BBC Music Direct £19.99



Scarlatti's sparklers played on harpsichord, piano, harp, accordion, and guitar (bravo,

Luigi Attademo). Superb, idiomatic performances with vivid colour.

PERFORMANCE RECORDING





UNO + ONE: Italia Nostra

Monteverdi • Castaldi • Rossi • Castello Pesenti • Kapsberger

TENET

Pre-eminent New York-based early music ensemble TENET debuts on AVIE with UNO + ONE: Italia Nostra, an imaginatively programmed and idiomatically performed recording that features *canzonette*, *arie* and *scherzi* by Monteverdi and his contemporaries.



Les Amis

Debussy Danses sacrée et profane Petite suite • Trio Sonata Caplet Divertissements • The Masque of the Red Death

Elizabeth Hainen, harp Michael Stern, IRIS Orchestra Jeffrey Khaner, flute Roberto Diaz, viola

Elizabeth Hainen, principal harpist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, pairs works of two early 20th-century French friends, including a rare recording of Caplet's Masque of the Red Death inspired by the short story of Edgar Allen Poe.



1 2285

Homage to Schubert

Schubert • Kurtág • Widmann

Benjamin Hochman, piano

Israeli-American pianist Benjamin Hochman debuts on AVIE with Homage to Schubert, pairing two contrasting Schubert Sonatas — D664 and D850 — with modern tributes by Kurtág and Jörg Widmann.



2004











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BRIEF NOTES

Your quick listening guide to more new releases, including mesmerising songs from medieval France and Vierne from Hans-Eberhard Ross

JS Bach Organ Works, Vol. 2 Robert Quinney

Coro COR16112 £9.99



Several of Bach's greatest hits for the organ are heard here on an ideal instrument (Trinity College,

Cambridge) in sober performances from Robert Quinney.

(JA) ★★★★

Cambrai Devotional Songs Graindelavoix/Björn Schmelzer Glossa GCDP32108 £15.99



I've anticipated this disc since being blown away by Volume 1 (Ossuaires: GCDP32107) in 2012. Mesmerising

immediacy and earthiness: worth the wait. (BW) ★★★★

Glass Concerto for Harpsichord and Chamber Orchestra **Rutter Suite antique etc**

Christopher D Lewis (harpsichord), John McMurtery (flute); West Side Chamber Orchestra/Kevin Mallon Naxos 8.573146 £6.99



Typically adventurous, Naxos programmes Rutter's pastoral prettiness with Glass's insistent

dancing patterns and Françaix's lissom, quirky lyricism. (BW) ★★★

Goldmark Rustic Wedding Symphony; Symphony No. 2 Singapore Symphony/Lan Shui BIS (hybrid CD/SACD) BIS-1842 £12.99



Goldmark's tuneful Rustic Wedding Symphony became a staunch favourite of Beecham and

Bernstein. It is projected here with infectious enthusiasm by Shui and his excellent orchestra. (EL) ★★★★

Kantelinen Lumikuningatar (The Snow Queen)

Finnish National Opera/Kantelinen Ondine ODE 1231-2 **£12.99**



Kantelinen has written scores for more than 30 films, and this opulent suite from his recent Christmas ballet

also features chunks of easy listening. Splendid performance and recording, but the music wilts. (GB) ★★



Reger Organ works, Vol. 13 Christian Barthen (organ)

Naxos 8.572906 £6.99



An attractive introduction to Reger's organ music: some important works played with flair on

an instrument from the composer's day. (JA) ★★★

Reger Organ works David Goode (organ)

Signum SIGCD 329 £12.99



This recording includes Reger's two biggest works for organ: Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme

and Introduction and Passacaglia in E minor. Though well-handled by Goode, the results are relentlessly dense. (JA) ★★★

Schenker Five Piano Pieces. Op. 4; Two Inventions, Op. 5 Brahms Two Intermezzos, Op. 116; etc

Dirk Joeres (piano)

Musical Concepts MC 146 £14.99



Musical theorist Heinrich Schenker left a tantalisingly small number of finely crafted works that

illustrate his profound admiration for Brahms. Joeres is an engaging and insightful interpreter of both composers. (EL) ★★★★

Schumann Symphony No. 1; Symphony in D minor etc WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln/ Heinz Holliger

Audite 97.677 **£14.99**



Holliger's profound empathy for Schumann shines through these outstanding performances which

sustain a miraculous transparency of orchestral texture without sacrificing expressive intensity. (EL) ★★★★

Spohr Symphonies Nos 4 & 5; Overture 'Der Matrose'

NDR Radiophilharmonic Hannover/ **Howard Griffiths**

CPO 777 745-2 £12.99



Enormously popular during the Victorian era, Spohr's Weihe der Töne Symphony (No. 4) occupies a halfway

house between Beethoven and Mendelssohn. Elegant performances in vibrant sound. (EL) ★★★★

Vasks Flute Concerto etc Faust (flute), Arnold (piano); Sinfonia

Finlandia Jyväskylä/Patrick Gallois Naxos 8.572634 **£6.99**



Vasks deserves to be better known. His colourful, dramatic music is well-served here by powerful

orchestral work and sensitive playing by the soloists. (BW) ★★★★

Vierne Complete Organ Symphonies, Vol. 2 Hans-Eberhard Ross

Audite 92.675 £15.99



An exciting release that embraces all the drama, quirkiness and transcendent beauty of Vierne's huge organ

Symphonies. Ross's brilliant playing is captured in good sound. (JA) ★★★★

Blue Clavichord 20th-century music for clavichord, harpsichord and recorder

Chapman (harpsichord), Turner (recorder), Dickinson (clavichord, piano); The Verdehr Trio Heritage HTGCD 259 £10.99



Dickinson's clavichord compositions and transcriptions reveal the instrument's capacity for sounding

bluesy, while Alan Ridout's gentle modernism exploits its darker timbres. (BW) ★★★★

Carpentersville 20th-century American Songs

Lucy Schaufer (mezzo-soprano) ABC Classics ABC 481 0331 £14.99



Born in Carpentersville, Illinois. Schaufer offers a full-blooded mix of classy American show songs, plus

Bach's 'Erbarme dich'. Words don't always come through clearly, but feelings do. (GB) ★★★★

Composing Without the Picture

Works by Morricone, Williams, Toch, Rózsa, Gunning, Marianelli, Heffes, Velázquez and Wallfisch Richard Harwood (cello)

Resonus RES 10121 Download only



Music for solo cello by film composers: an engaging idea, delivered by Harwood with fire. Rózsa's

Toccata capricciosa tops the list, but most items, new or old, are worth hearing. (GB) ★★★★

Forever Songs from Vienna, **Broadway and Hollywood** Damrau (soprano), Villazón (tenor); Royal Liverpool Philharmonic

Orchestra/David Charles Abell Erato 602 6662 £11.99



Lehár, Loewe, Kalmán and Disney songs glide by, enhanced by Damrau's creamy tone and laser precision,

though the orchestra's clamour grows wearing. Rolando Villazón's guest appearance is a distraction. (GB) ★★★

Reviewers: John Allison (JA), Geoff Brown (GB), Erik Levi (EL), Barry Witherden (BW)

DVD & BLU-RAY

Daniel Barenboim delivers a magnificently detailed Bruckner Fifth in Berlin; a comparison of two very different quality Eugene Onegins; plus getting up close and personal with conductor Andris Nelsons

$lue{m}\mathcal{U}$ SIC DVD CHOICE

War and peace

Daniel Jaffé enjoys a film about the roots of Benjamin Britten's pacifism





BENJAMIN BRITTEN: PEAČE AND CONFLICT

A film by Tony Britten

Alex Lawther (Britten), John Hurt (narrator); with Raphael Wallfisch, lain Burnside etc, The Benyounes Quartet, Gresham's Brass Group & Senior Choir Capriol Films CAP 08 105:00 mins

BBC Music Direct £14.99

Britten's life-long pacifism is central to much of his work including the War Requiem, yet has rather been taken for granted by biographers. The usual assumption – encouraged by Britten himself - is that his principles came from his teacher,

Frank Bridge. Tony Britten (no relation), writer, producer and director of this thought-provoking film, now suggests an entirely new but persuasive theory: that Britten's pacifism and left-wing politics were forged during his two years boarding at Gresham's School. Though the

Britten's pacifism and left-wing politics were forged at Gresham's

sensitive and homesick Britten sometimes loathed 'this abominable hole', Gresham's was a progressive school where independent thought was encouraged. The recent trauma of World War I, in which a fifth of former Gresham's pupils who had served were killed, meant anti-war sentiments were openly preached in the school chapel. Many of its pupils had liberal or left-leaning parents; indeed – as the film shows – many of Britten's long-term friends from Gresham's were sympathetic to, or even joined, the Communist Party.

Atmospherically filmed, Britten's school days are re-enacted at Gresham's itself by a fine young cast, with Alex Lawther as a fey yet intense Britten. John Hurt's narrative binds the film's elements, including some documentary footage, several interviews, and performances given by interviewees such as Raphael Wallfisch and Iain Burnside. Tony Britten's film amounts to far more than the sum of its parts, managing to avoid the potential pitfalls of such a mix through scrupulous research and faithfulness to its material. Truly revelatory. Daniel Jaffé PERFORMANCE

PICTURE & SOUND



BRUCKNER

Symphony No. 5 in B flat Staatskapelle Berlin/Daniel Barenboim Accentus Music ACC 202175 76:49 mins **BBC Music Direct**

This release is drawn from the astounding marathon of six Bruckner performances that Daniel Barenboim conducted in just over a week at the Philharmonie Berlin in June 2010. The Fifth is possibly the most taxing of all Bruckner's Symphonies, not least for requiring performers to unlock seemingly inexhaustible reserves of stamina to sustain the musical argument over such a huge time-span. Yet the Berlin Staatskapelle rises to the challenge magnificently. Quite simply the playing is awesome, not just in terms of its technical excellence, but also in the great subtlety of nuance and tonal variety that is projected in every passage, and perfectly blended ensemble at the climaxes. The orchestra's dynamic range is equally impressive, the hushed otherworldly pianissimos at the opening of the first movement providing a stark contrast to the sudden explosion of power that is unleashed in the ensuing unison passage. A similar sense of mystery is achieved at the opening of the Finale, in stark contrast to the great fugue subject enunciated with unparalleled vehemence by cellos and double basses.

Barenboim's extremely detailed interpretation is unashamedly theatrical in conception. He doesn't shirk from the opportunity to whip up the emotional temperature at moments of greatest intensity, and the pacing overall has a wonderful sense of fluidity. Other conductors, such as Günter Wand, are more stoical, and achieve a greater sense of symphonic cohesion without recourse to such widely fluctuating tempos. Nonetheless, it's easy to understand the audience's wild enthusiasm at the close, the sheer majesty of the coda, where Barenboim audaciously doubles the brass and timpani, can only be described as breathtaking. The camera work and production offer nothing that distracts from the musical experience, though it would have been great to have been given a brief snapshot of Barenboim rehearsing the work. Erik Levi

PERFORMANCE PICTURE & SOUND



ELGAR

Enigma Variations; Rehearsal documentary (including interview with Leonard Bernstein)

BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Leonard Bernstein ICA Classics ICAD 5098 65:20 mins **BBC Music Direct** £20.99

It's worth watching the rehearsal before the performance, as it gives a good idea of Bernstein's approach to Elgar's (see below) Enigma Variations. He wants the theme to be played molto vibrato, and it's very slow, but he asks the players to listen to each other, so that they are aware of the orchestral balance and ensemble. Fast movements tend to be very fast, which raises a few eyebrows among the musicians, and there's a little friction with the trumpet section at one point, but he does get the BBC Symphony Orchestra, which he had never conducted before, to respond to his intense direction. 'Nimrod' is famously slow, hovering at around half speed, but the split screen shows how Bernstein manages to create and hold the tension, rarely losing the line.

In the performance the theme is still stately but has more flexibility and flow, as does 'Nimrod', but the enormous slowing-down to get into

BACKGROUND TO...

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)



One of the most quintessentially English composers, Elgar's music ranges from his early triumph, The Serenade for

Strings, to his final masterpiece, the Cello Concerto, which became famous as a result of Jacqueline Du Pre's 1960s recording. He rose from humble roots, (his father was the propreitor of a Worcester music shop), making his name at choral festivals. His success led to him being knighted (1904) and an appointment as Master of the Kings Musick in 1924. The identity of the hidden theme of his Enigma Variations (1899) still intrigues scholars today.

it destroys the end of the previous variation. It's the poised music that comes off best, with both 'Ysobel' and 'Dorabella' exuding charm and having smiles on their faces. The sound is good for its time and the camera-work isn't over fussy - it homes in on relevant areas of the orchestra, without becoming too intrusive in close-up. Even Bernstein is treated as part of the overall picture on the whole, and this is an accurate record of the concert. Whether the extremes of Bernstein's interpretation add up to an Enigma Variations you'd want to watch frequently is another matter. Martin Cotton PERFORMANCE PICTURE & SOUND EXTRAS



GLASS

The Perfect American

Christopher Purves, David Pittsinger, Donald Kaasch, Janis Kelly, Marie Mclaughlin, Sarah Tynan, Nazan Fikret, Rosie Lomas, Zachary James, John Easterlin, Juan Noval-Moro, Beatriz de Gálvez, Noelia Buñuel; Orchestra & Choir of Teatro Real Madrid; The Improbable Skills Ensemble/Dennis Russell Davies (Teatro Real, Madrid, 2013) EuroArts OA 1117 D 120:00 mins

£28.99

BBC Music Direct

In Peter Stephan Jungk's fictionalised story of Walt Disney's last months, cartoon colours and fairy-tale endings fall away to expose the grim realities faced by a man with cancer and a corporation in decline. Jungk expands on the rumour, circulated after Disney's death in 1966, that the business magnate wanted to be immortal (like Mickey Mouse) and requested he be cryogenically preserved. That rumour is false; but it's this tension – between the Disney of Snow White stardust, and he of deeper, darker truths - that seems ripe for the operatic stage.

Phelim McDermott's slick production, recorded here at its world premiere this year at the Teatro Real, Madrid, however, is an altogether dark affair. From Rudy Wurlitzer's libretto we learn that Disney is little more than a bigoted businessman who treated and paid his staff poorly, while he himself was unable to draw (also untrue). There are moments when Uncle Walt shows a sunnier side, such as in the opening scenes, where he and his brother, Roy,

nostalgically recall their childhood spent on a farm in Missouri, but Walt's character – the negative of an icon – never seems fully realised.

Christopher Purves fully engages with the lead role, injecting energy into a score that (perhaps unusually for a style based on such propulsive repetition) often lacks momentum. Glass has tweaked his familiar arpeggios to incorporate nods to Gershwin and Copland; stage appearances from Andy Warhol (a Walt admirer) and a robotic Abraham Lincoln, too, remind us that the magic of Disney is a homegrown fantasy. The staging is visually strong - sketches are projected on to screens, providing an alternative to the drawings Disney would not have allowed - and the filming is well choreographed, but overall this opera is hard to get animated about. Nick Shave

PERFORMANCE PICTURE & SOUND



Die Zauberflöte

Pavol Breslik, Kate Royal, Dimitry Ivashchenko, Ana Durlovski, Michael Nagy, Regula Mühlemann, Annick Massis, Magdalena Kožená etc; Berlin Philharmonic/Sir Simon Rattle Berliner Philharmoniker BPH 130011 163:00 mins (2 discs)

Available berliner-philharmoniker.de

Director Robert Carsen counted more than 60 references to death in Die Zauberflöte; so it's perhaps no surprise to find Tamino clambering out of a grave at the start of this production for last spring's Baden-Baden Easter Festival. The Three Ladies are in mourning, Monostatos and his crew are gravediggers, and Sarastro and company, who seem to inhabit Pluto's realm of darkness, are blindfolded.

Think Eros and Thanatos; think the battle between life, love and death. Think, too, of the need for Tamino and Pamina to grow away from parental relationships, embodied in Sarastro and the Queen of the Night - who, incidentally, are in cahoots. You need quite a pool of literary reference for this production which, although it's as thoughtful and searching as Carsen's work often tends to be, is short on any sense of real enchantment or wonder.

The cast is generally strong, if not outstanding: I particularly enjoyed

soprano Kate Royal's deeply musical and ever-anguished Pamina, and soprano Ana Durlovski's superbly robust Queen of Night. Simon Rattle, who claims to have spent his life avoiding this opera, is indeed not totally at ease with it. His deliberately volatile and sometimes unstable tempos actually help to deprive this performance of the spark and the strength that surely could be drawn from the excellent playing of the Berlin Philharmonic.

Rattle's illuminating 17-minute introduction to the opera itself is a true Bonus; as is a refreshingly honest and plain-speaking interview with Carsen. I wouldn't, though, be over-thrilled to find this under my Christmas tree. Hilary Finch PERFORMANCE PICTURE & SOUND **EXTRAS**





TCHAIKOVSKY

Eugene Onegin

Helene Schneiderman, Kristine Opolais, Lena Belkina, Margarita Nekrasova, Artur Ruciński, Dmitry Korchak, Günther Groissböck etc; Chor de la Generalitat Valenciana; Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana/Omer Meir Wellber; dir. Mariusz Treliński (Valencia, 2011) Unitel Classica DVD: 712408; Blu-ray: 712504 150:00 mins

BBC Music Direct (DVD & Blu-ray)

£34.99

TCHAIKOVSKY

Eugene Onegin

Simon Keenlyside, Krassimira Stoyanova, Pavol Breslik, Peter Rose; Royal Opera House/Robin Ticciati; dir. Kasper Holten (Covent Garden, 2012)

Opus Arte DVD: OA 1120 D; Blu-ray: OA BD7133 D 154:00 mins

BBC Music Direct (DVD) £28.99 (Blu-ray)

£34.99

These two DVDs of polarised productions encapsulate the heaven and hell of reviewing. Heaven is the chance to confim that what I first felt about Kasper Holten's deeply human Royal Opera Eugene Onegin, with its layered and passionate focus on a messed-up love between confused young man and determined girl. Hell was seeing Mariusz Treliński's opening image of an older Onegin as stout vampire (actor and Valencia/ Warsaw production choreographer Emil Wesołowski) and anticipating two more hours of the same.

'Characters' in this skilfully but hideously lit and designed travesty of Pushkin and Tchaikovsky are either zombies copied from a classic Robert Wilson vision - its absurdity peaking in the first ball's wolf masks and camp ballet - or doomed to flail in clashing naturalism. A fine central couple is betrayed. Kristine Opolais's physical grace and fine lyric-dramatic soprano would elsewhere embody the young and older Tatyanas; baritone Artur Ruciński phrases the Act I arioso better than anyone since Dmitri Hvorostovsky. But Treliński renders his Onegin a mere cold demon until the last act. Conductor Omer Meir Wellber's sometimes cripplingly slow tempos indulge Dmitry Korchak's show-offy tenorishness. The Valencia orchestra is poor, the chorus wretched and there's a dead spot downstage left, which kills the voices.

Every key point which crashes here deeply moved me in Holten's production. Holten's principals break the heart: Krassimira Stoyanova's aching, ringing Tatyana embraces her youthful alter ego at the core of the Letter Scene; baritone Simon Keenlyside's 'old' Onegin wills tenor Pavol Breslik's handsome Lensky not to die. Mezzo Elena Maximova's Olga and bass Peter Rose's Gremin are nuanced characters, not the usual ciphers; Robin Ticciati mirrors the production's palpitations in flexible conducting. The little introductory documentaries are excellent, and though you may not want Holten's commentary above the music, all he says makes sense. Up there with more outlandish concepts from Salzburg and Moscow, this is warmer than both. David Nice

ROH: PERFORMANCE PICTURE & SOUND EXTRAS

VALENCIA: PERFORMANCE PICTURE & SOUND



WEBER

Hunter's Bride (Der Freischütz - The Marksman) Franz Grundheber, Benno Schollum, Juliane Banse, Regula Mühlemann,

Michael Volle, Michael König, René Pape,

Olaf Bär; LSO/Daniel Harding Arthaus Musik 101 692 137:00 mins

£20.99 **BBC Music Direct**

Der Freischütz (The Freeshooter) took Europe by storm in 1821 and inspired a host of other composers, especially Wagner. It tells the tale of Max the assistant forester, who makes a deal with the devil to ensure his hunting prowess will win the hand of Agathe, the chief forester's attractive daughter. Increasingly, producers stage this opera as a creaky relic, merely camping up its mix of rustic and supernatural. Director Jens Neubert emphatically avoids that trap; Hunter's Bride, an earlier title for the work, seriously seeks to recreate this archetypal Romantic opera for the screen.

Neubert's film centres on conductor Daniel Harding's vibrant reading, with a cast of first-rate actor-singers and a delightful young newcomer, soprano Regula Mühlemann, as Ännchen. Neubert exploits advanced camera and recording techniques to integrate music, image and sound effects, often atmospheric but sometimes irritatingly obtrusive. His imagery frequently reflects Caspar David Friedrich's mystical landscapes, to beautiful effect.

Unfortunately Neubert also seems to feel the old-fashioned compulsion to excuse Romanticism with ideological overlay - rather as early Soviet Russia performed Puccini's Tosca as the renamed 'Struggle for the Commune', ending with the heroine dying to uphold the ideas of Communism. Hence Neubert updates Der Freischütz to the Napoleonic Wars, with the overture noisily representing a battle (as it did Gettysburg in the early silent film classic Birth of a Nation,) and the 'death of idealism'. Huntsmen become ducal soldiers with tenor Michael König's Max represented as a straggle-haired, battle-happy paranoid and baritone Michael Volle's Caspar appearing as a simian thug. They are unlikely rivals for soprano Juliane Banse's now aristocratic Agathe, who for Neubert is the real protagonist. The Wolf's Glen, the scene of terrifying supernatural events, is horribly littered with unburied casualties, but its apparitions are surprisingly unimaginative. Bass René Pape's Hermit leads something like a popular demonstration, hardly what the music suggests. And then there are puppets...

But despite some sillinesses this is actually an enterprising Freischütz adaptation, visually striking and with an excellent core performance. This is well worth an open-minded look. Michael Scott Rohan

PERFORMANCE PICTURE & SOUND EXTRAS







ZIMMERMANN

Die Soldaten

Alfred Muff, Laura Aikin, Tanja Ariane Baumgartner, Tomasz Konieczny, Renée Morloc, Gabriela Beňačková, Matthias Klink, Daniel Brenna etc; Vienna Philharmonic/Ingo Metzmacher; dir. Alvis Hermanis (Salzburg 2012) EuroArts DVD: 2072588; Blu-ray: 2072584 122:00 mins

BBC Music Direct (DVD) £28.99 (Blu-ray) £34.99

The tragic tale of Marie's descent into prostitution after being seduced, and then passed down the ranks, by an aristocratic officer, Zimmermann's 1965 opera is an icon of Germany's post-war avant-garde. Its daunting demands - multiple acting spaces, three film screens, pre-recorded tape, huge percussion-heavy orchestra plus jazz combo, large cast, complex polystylistic textures and forbiddingly angular vocal writing - have recently rendered it more talked about than seen (the only other DVD, on Arthaus, dates from 1989). Sadly, though strikingly theatrical, this 2012 Salzburg staging is about as faithful to Zimmermann's dramatic intentions as the soldiers are to their women.

Its biggest plus is its venue: the many simultaneous scenes, tricky to realise behind a conventional proscenium arch, here unfold in panoramic counterpoint on the 40m-wide expanse of Salzburg's Felsenreitschule stage, whose equine past (as the former archiepiscopal stables) prompts much of the imagery, not least a horseback parade of half-dressed prostitutes that reflects the soldiers' craving for flesh of all kinds. The space also enables a genuine theatrical coup when, just before Marie's 'fall', a stunt-double tightrope-walks across it in a visual metaphor for her moral balancing act between chastity and surrender.

However, in substituting projections of explicit pornographic photos of naked women for Zimmermann's specified audiovisual collages of marching men, Hermanis subverts a savage serialist satire on German militarism into a more generalised attack on men's sexual objectification of women: a 'freak show' of disfigured male faces even seems to spell out the crude message that all men are monsters.

Such crudity is perhaps apt for a work whose aural impact, however intellectually complex its musical processes, is one of almost unrelieved cacophony. It must be ungrateful music to sing, it certainly is to listen to, yet the sheer commitment of the huge ensemble cast (with Laura Aiken, Tomasz Konieczny and

Daniel Brenna as the pivotal lovetriangle) and the unstinting efforts of the Vienna Philharmonic under modernist maestro Ingo Metzmacher ensure that Zimmermann's musical rage comes through loud and clear. Mark Pappenheim

PERFORMANCE PICTURE & SOUND



ANDRIS NELSONS: GENIUS ON FIRE

A film by Astrid Bscher Includes performances with Kristine Opolais, Klaus Florian Vogt and others Orfeo C 874 131 V 68 mins

BBC Music Direct £32.99

A powerhouse of musical intensity and energy, Andris Nelsons (opposite, top) is one of the hottest conducting talents around. Still in his mid-thirties, he has been music director of the CBSO since 2008 and next year is poised to take over at the helm of the Boston Symphony. Charismatic and contagious, he possesses the rare ability of being able to live in the moment yet maintain a firm hold on music's structural rudder.

Director Astrid Bscher spent two years with the young maestro, capturing intimate moments behind the scenes with family, friends and in rehearsal, and what emerges is a young man bursting with talent but with his feet firmly on the ground. It's a journey as exhilarating as the performances he obtains, yet away from the adrenaline rush of his rehearsals and concerts he emerges as a calm, thoughtful personality he even finds time to introduce his beloved pet terrier to the orchestra in his home city of Riga.

Yet it is music that above all fires his imagination. As he freely admits, his brain is continually multitasking, working over in his mind thorny interpretative problems. No matter where he is or what he is doing music is coursing through his subconscious. His infectious dynamism is so close to the edge at times that one cannot help but fear for his health, but as long as he can sustain his insatiable musical vision, orchestras and audiences will be queuing up to journey with him. Julian Haylock PERFORMANCE

PICTURE & SOUND

IN BRIEF

Reviewed by David Nice

MINKUS

La Bayadère

Soloists; The Bolshoi Ballet; The Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra/Pavel Sorokin BelAir Classiques BAC 101 126:00 mins **BBC** Music Direct



Kitsch even by classical ballet standards, this Bolshoi production of the Marius Petipachoreographed oriental fantasy with bland

music by Minkus boasts a celebrated Kingdom of Shades sequence.

PERFORMANCE

PICTURE & SOUND

ASHTON CELEBRATION

Works by Ravel, Massenet, J Strauss, Satie and Liszt

The Royal Ballet; Orchestra of the Royal Opera House/Emmanuel Plasson Opus Arte OA 1116 D 84:00 mins **BBC Music Direct**



Variable offerings from choreographer Frederick Ashton his La valse is surely a poor reflection of Ravel's score - all

impeccably executed. Worth seeing for stars including Tamara Rojo.

PERFORMANCE PICTURE & SOUND

TCHAIKOVSKY

The Nutcracker and the Mouse King Anna Tsygankova, Matthew Golding etc; Dutch National Ballet; Holland Symfonia/Ermanio Florio Arthaus Musik 101 636 108:00 mins **BBC Music Direct**



A Dutch Nutcracker means canal-skating and presents on the feast of St Nicholas. The Hoffmann tale is effectively followed

through, to a bravura pas de deux from Tsygankova and Golding. PERFORMANCE PICTURE & SOUND

PROKOFIEV

Cinderella

Soloists; Dutch National Ballet; Holland Symfonia/Ermanno Florio Opus Arte OA 1114 D 120:00 mins **BBC Music Direct**



After a convoluted start, Christopher Wheeldon's narrative offers magic in every sphere - design, choreography, and

orchestra. Anna Tsyganova's Cinderella is charming.

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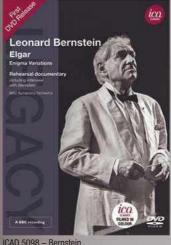
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JAZZ

Detroit sounds from pianist *Geri Allen*; *Ralph Towner* joins an ECM guitar trio; *Robert Glasper* experiments; plus drummer *Magnus Öström*

ullet MUSIC JAZZ CHOICE

Inspired by Detroit

Barry Witherden enjoys a disc by pianist Geri Allen, as she reflects on her hometown





GERIALLEN

Grand River Crossings: Motown & Motor City Inspirations
Geri Allen (piano), Marcus Belgrave (trumpet), David McMurray (sax)
Motema 233768 54:28 mins
BBC Music Direct £14.99

Geri Allen has worked with many major figures (a special distinction is that she's among the small handful of keyboard players to have performed with Ornette Coleman) and she has been involved in some testing performance contexts. Yet, for some reason, she has never garnered the public or critical recognition accorded, say, Keith Jarrett or Brad Mehldau.

Crossings completes the trilogy begun with Allen's excellent 2010 project, Flying Toward the Sound. It pays tribute to the musical life of Detroit in general and Motown and the celebrated high school, Cass Tech, in particular. Belgrave and McMurray join her for two tracks each; otherwise these are solo performances displaying her customary lyricism, quiet technical command, thoughtful exploratory instincts and restrained emotional dimensions. The album is full of melodic and harmonic invention, not least in paraphrases of Motown classics like 'Tears of a Clown', as well as subtle, genuine feeling and many passages of elegant beauty. PERFORMANCE RECORDING

Hear an excerpt of this recording at www.classical-music.com



MAGNUS ÖSTRÖM

Searching For Jupiter Magnus Öström (drums), Andreas Hourdakis (guitars), Daniel Karlsson (piano), Thobias Gabrielson (bass) etc ACT 9541-2 56:32 mins

BBC Music Direct £15.99

Best-known as the drummer in the hugely successful Esbjörn Svensson Trio (EST), this is Magnus Öström's second release since Svensson's tragic death five years ago. The title refers to the god Jupiter bringing light to tragedy. For this follow-up to his debut Thread of Life he uses the same core of Swedish musicians but adds a new pianist, Daniel Karlsson. The opener 'The Moon (And the Air it Moves)', although a shade brighter than his first album's devastating 'Prelude', keeps the slow building atmosphere. Some may find that this sense of brooding reflection continues to overwhelm much of the album. But there are moments where the mood lifts, such as on 'Happy and the Fall', with Karlsson's tumbling piano hook. On 'Dancing at the Dutchtreat' this joyful, catchy highlight is propelled forward by a jazz-rock beat and sets the stage for guitarist Hourdakis and the band to shine. Neil McKim

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



ROBERT GLASPER EXPERIMENT

Black Radio 2
Robert Glasper (keyboards), Derrick
Hodge (bass), Casey Benjamin (sax) etc
Blue Note 374 3383 59:49 mins
BBC Music Direct £14.99

The US jazz pianist Robert Glasper recently told *Down Beat* magazine, 'I

feel like jazz needs a big-ass slap'. He's tried giving it several, with the release of a series of genre bending records that have done well in the mainstream charts. With his Experiment band, Black Radio won him a Grammy in the 'R&B' section: a misleadingly named style of music that is a blend of smooth neo-soul and hip-hop. Black Radio 2 picks up where that left off and Glasper's polished soundsmithing showcases over a dozen singers and rappers including Norah Jones, Snoop Dogg and Emeli Sandé. It's a slick and ear-catching programme, where beats meet subtle jazz harmonies against high production values. But Glasper hasn't really taken jazz any further than say, funky pianist George Duke. Like Duke and other crossover specialists, Glasper's musicality has actually done more for mainstream music - and jazz didn't feel a thing. Garry Booth

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



TOWNER • MUTHSPIEL • GRIGORYAN

Travel Guide

Ralph Towner, Wolfgang Muthspiel, Slava Grigoryan (guitars) ECM 372 9508 50:32 mins

BBC Music Direct £14.99

Guitar ensembles usually have at least a whiff of Roland Barthes's 'musica practica' about them in that while their music exists to be listened to, it tends to be by other guitarists. This trio is a more interesting beast and its presentation on the ECM roster (Ralph Towner is a veteran, Wolfgang Muthspiel a newcomer but widely recorded elsewhere, Slava Grigoryan likewise and slightly less so) bodes well for the project.

What the three guitarists have in common is a grounding in multiple aspects of this mercurial instrument, producing a music that happily stirs jazz, Baroque, Latin, folk and contemporary influences into a likeable mix that manages to be entirely unselfconscious simply because the guitar inhabits all these traditions anyway. The compositions are nuanced and detailed and reward repeated listening, but the recording quality loses a couple of stars due to what sounds like an odd rounding-off of the upper frequencies in places. Roger Thomas

PERFORMANCE RECORDING



No. 161 Jimmy Smith

Geoffrey Smith, presenter of Geoffrey Smith's Jazz, on the trailblazing jazz Hammond organ player



In 1956, Francis Wolff, co-owner of Blue Note records, had a jazz revelation at a Harlem club: 'a

man in convulsions, face contorted, crouched over in apparent agony, his fingers flying, his feet dancing over the pedals. The air was filled with waves of sound... the noise was shattering.' The source of this shock was a sometime pianist named Jimmy Smith, who'd turned the Hammond organ from a cheesy, churchy novelty into an awesome groove machine. Though there had been other jazz organists, he alone had unleashed the full potential of its electronic power, not just working out potent new sonorities, but taking its technical possibilities to a new level. Pedals pumping out bass lines, right hand flailing funky licks over surging left hand chords, he was a new-age one man band, a soul virtuoso who became famous as 'The Incredible Jimmy Smith'.

And soul was the key. Smith's repertoire was as magnetic as his attack, wailing, preaching blues with a bebop edge that spoke to listeners who wanted music that was down home but hip. 'Back to the Chicken Shack', 'The Sermon' – his very titles evoked black

experience, though he once said that 95 per cent of his audience was white. White or black, it was huge. The galvanic Smith style – in its classic format of organ and drums, plus guitar or tenor sax – supplied the soundtrack for the soul jazz phenomenon that put its mark on pop culture until it was supplanted by synthesised rock.

Though his later recordings can seem somewhat formulaic, his 1950s Blue Note discs convey their original energy. Some of his most impressive tracks are collected on the Proper Box compilation *Electrifyin*', including his trademark trios and all-star line-ups featuring the likes of drummer Art Blakey and trumpeter Lee Morgan. And Smith is their equal in passion and invention, conveying his delight at the moment he found his very own sound on the Hammond: 'and when I did, I pulled out all the stops, all the stops I could find.' Geoffrey Smith's essential quide to jazz, the '100 Jazz Legends' iPad app, is available on iTunes for £4.99

CD CHOICE



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BOOKS

Two authors fall under Wagner's spell with contrasting results: a scholarly reading of his music and an altogether less reliable biography

$lue{m}\mathcal{U}S$ IC BOOKS CHOICE

Reading between the lines

Michael Scott Rohan enjoys a biographical analysis of Wagner's work



RICHARD WAGNER: A Life in Music

Martin Geck; translated by **Stewart Spencer**

University of Chicago Press ISBN: 978-0-226-92461-8 416pp **BBC Music Direct**

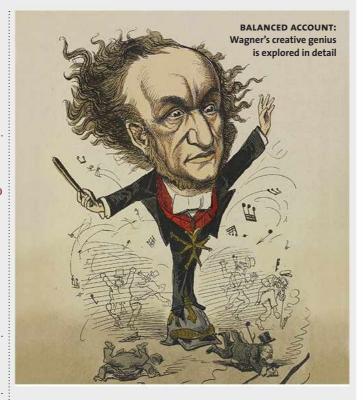
£24.50

This Wagner centenary has provided an ideal opportunity for fresh thinking about this controversial composer. The proto-Nazi caricature created by tendentious authors such as Robert Gutman and Joachim Köhler is already largely buried. Indeed Köhler, author of Wagner's Hitler, has even undergone a

Martin Geck identifies the roots of Wagner's anti-Semitism

Damascene conversion, his latest book revealing the composer as a good-natured, light-hearted liberal, even his anti-Semitism mostly a theatrical pose. While this isn't entirely untrue, it's as shallow a view as the other; we need much deeper studies to approach Wagner's complex but all too human genius. Martin Geck's new book makes a valiant attempt.

Geck, professor of music at Dortmund, is a veteran scholar who helped prepare the New Wagner Edition. He has produced prestigious biographies of Bach and Schumann, but this book goes



beyond biography, assuming readers are already familiar with Wagner's life story. Instead it's through his works that Geck explores and analyses Wagner's development – personal and creative – from the teenage tragedy Leubald und Adelaide to the major music dramas and even unfinished projects.

It's an admirably erudite approach. It's also insular, drawing heavily on Germanic establishment viewpoints, including ambivalent commentators such as Thomas Mann and Theodor Adorno and also, unfortunately, the less impressive posturings of producers

such as Hans Neuenfels. Geck identifes the roots of Wagner's weirdly inconsistent anti-Semitism, while keeping it in proportion, and adds sketches of prominent Jewish Wagnerian intellectuals, including George Steiner's fascinating reflection that both Adolf Hitler and Theodor Herzl, founder of Zionism, claimed they were inspired by the Rienzi overture.

Stewart Spencer's scholarly translation faithfully reproduces Geck's grave style. For those with Wagner-honed stamina, this is a rewarding, informative and thought-provoking read. ★★★



RICHARD WAGNER

Raymond Furness

Reaktion Books ISBN: 978-1-78023-182-2 224pp

BBC Music Direct

£10.95

This book is one of a series called Critical Lives, some of which I have found useful and interesting. (See November 2012 for Robert Worby's review of the book on John Cage and October 2010 for Roger Nichols's review of the Claude Debussy volume.) This one, unfortunately, is undermined by sloppiness in the writing and by a really astonishing number of errors and misprints. For instance Adolphe Appia, the great Swiss theorist of stage production and lighting, is given the dates 1826-1862, though shortly after is said to have gone to see Parsifal in Bayreuth (which is misspelt once) in 1882: actually he lived from 1862 to 1928. There are so many mistakes of this kind that after a certain point a reader who is trying to follow the intermittent narrative of Wagner's life will be utterly confused.

Other mistakes, for instance 'inimitable' for 'inimical', are just baffling. I can only conjecture that the book was written in a great hurry by someone who felt himself so much at ease with Wagner's works and life that he didn't need to check anything, and that no one at the publishing house bothered to either.

Raymond Furness has previously written illuminatingly on Wagner's impact on literature (Wagner and Literature, Manchester University Press), but the only things I can recommend about this book are the illustrations, some of them unusual and fascinating. The musical works receive unequal attention. The central work, the Ring, is dealt with cursorily except for the conclusion of the cycle, where we are treated to some detail. Furness is most passionate about Parsifal, which he treats at length.

There follows a compressed account of the history of opera productions at Bayreuth, in which more mistakes are made: Wieland Wagner didn't produce Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg in 1951; Götz Friedrich didn't ever produce the Ring in Bayreuth... and so on. These are small points, but they accumulate relentlessly. Michael Tanner ★★

AUDIO GIFT GUIDE

BBC Music Magazine's resident audio expert Michael Brook turns his ear to a selection of the best hi-fi kit for your Christmas wish-list



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A cross between a streaming speaker and a mini-system (a 'cross' in the sense that it looks a little like the two have been unceremoniously thrown together), the Consolette nonetheless sounds incredible. It's bigger than you might expect, and those hefty dimensions mean it can deliver room-filling sound regardless of how big a room you need to fill. As you'd expect, there's an Apple device dock, but there's also Apple's AirPlay wireless functionality to help grab audio from compatible devices, including laptops, smartphones and tablets. www.marantz.co.uk

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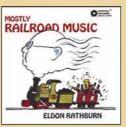
Fanfare for the Common Bassoonist, Hey Jude, Mexican Hat Dance, My Funny Valentine, Three Little Maids (Mikado), Godfather Suite, Pizzicato Polka, and more. **Sequel to Wanted! and just as hilarious.**



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CD420: TUBADOURS. Disneyland's favorite tuba quartet. 18 Classical favorites & 17 Christmas traditionals: Nutcracker, Fledermaus, March of the Toys, Comedians' Galop, Jingle Bells, Satin Doll, Mouret Rondo, Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, First Noel, God Rest Ye, O Tannenbaum, Away in a Manger, etc. "wonderfully smooth recording" (Fanfare)



CD520: MOSTLY RAILROAD MUSIC, by Eldon Rathburn. Delightful CD by one of Canada's foremost film composers. Three Steam Calliope Pieces, Junction (jaw harps), Rise and Fall of the Steam Railroad (calliope, jaw harp, synthesizer, banjos, mandolin, percussion, piano), Ghost Train, Schönberg vs. Gershwin, Dvorak at 155th Street, Hindemith Rides the Merchants Limited, etc. "an absolutely unique

and irresistable collection" (Fanfare) "Evocative, imagistic, and delightful. Playful and absorbing. Fascinating." (Classical disCDigest)



CD432: THE MAKE BELIEVE BRASS, Disneyland's full-time brass ensemble. 18 Wild, Wacky, & Winsome Works for Brass Quintet. Willy Tell Overture, 1812 Opener, Comedian's Galop, Sabre Dance, Over the Waves, Surprise Symphony, Symphony No. 5, Granada, Stars & Stripes, Mancini Medley, Dance of the Hours, In a Persian Market, Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy, etc. "a lot of fun; fine musicianship" (Fanfare)

Compact Discs US\$16.95 each (choose \$, £, \in , \neq , etc. on web orders)

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Style OVER substance?

Quite remarkably, many people today and probably a majority of teens and late teens, are listening to a considerably lower quality level of music than their peers back in the 1970's

Have advances in technology driven the desire for convenience and quantity at the expense of quality?

Listening to Music - the Benefits

There have been many studies carried out over the years that have shown remarkable benefits for mankind through listening to music. It is an activity that is intrinsic to all cultures and is one of the few that involves using the whole brain. Listening to music is now often used for various therapeutic purposes because it is believed to improve memory and intelligence, improve physical development and coordination, reduce stress and blood pressure, and even reduce levels of pain.

However, music can also be irritating if it's too loud or distorted, or if it distracts from other activities we are involved in Most of the studies have been carried out using a reasonably good quality of musical reproduction. Quite remarkably, many people today and probably a majority of teens and late teens, are listening to a considerably lower quality level of music than their peers back in the 1970's. Back then a basic hi-fi system, often consisting of just a turntable, amplifier and a pair of speakers, was a 'must have'. Students going off to university would make it a priority to set themselves up with a decent hi-fi system - and the quality was, in retrospect, surprisingly good.



Quality vs Quantity

How different it is today where advances in technology have driven the desire for convenience and quantity at the considerable expense of quality. For many young people especially, the iPod, MP3 player or mobile telephone, connected to a pair of in-ear headphones, is their primary source of listening to music. The problem with this is that low-grade reproduced music is not going to deliver any significant beneficial outcomes for the listener. Probably the opposite will be true.

Low-grade music in this context is the result of two main factors, a) the delivery system (the hardware) and b) the source material (the 'music'). Although the amplification section of the mobile device is a technological wonder, it's not hi-fi! Nor are in-ear headphones. They can't hold a candle to the stereo-typical system from the 1970's. As far as the source material is concerned, it's being over-generous to call it music if it's a typical MP3 or AAC (the iTunes default format) download. These are both highly compressed formats with the most popular download speed of 128 kbps being about one-eleventh the size of a full resolution CD track (1411 kbps), so the quality is inevitably far inferior. Information is irretrievably lost and the full dynamic range is lacking. Using an iPod while jogging does not really raise a quality issue but playing low-resolution tracks through, for example, an iPod docking station that feeds into a decent hifi system, is a disaster area. It is very poor quality made louder and this even affects the type of music listened to. For example, most classical recordings downloaded as an MP3 or AAC file are a complete waste of time because there is so much information

missing, all the complexities of the music are lost, and the recordings are reduced to just the essence of a tune.

Future of Recorded Music

If convenience has trumped quality for many people, we must ask what the future prospects are of maintaining high quality music recordings. Fortunately audiophiles, or hi-fi connoisseurs, or perhaps most accurately described, music lovers, continue to drive the demand for quality because there are some wonderful hi-end systems available and being sold today. Another important reason for hope within the mass-market is that there is no longer any over-riding reason for MP3 and AAC to have such a following. These formats were designed to overcome very slow download speeds pre-broadband and expensive memory capacity. These are not significant factors for most people now.

Even iPods, if loaded with full resolution tracks, can deliver acceptable results through a good system. The trade-off is a smaller selection of stored music. Full resolution audio streaming, as well as CD quality downloads, are already available and will become the norm as the wider public becomes aware of the tremendous quality benefit.



Audiophiles and Hi-Fi Connoisseurs

Hi-fi connoisseurs and audiophiles are very important to the music industry. By their nature, they are generally avid music lovers who enhance their enjoyment through listening to music at its very best quality level, which means playing great recordings through hi-end hi-fi to achieve the most outstanding results. Without them, the main driver for quality would probably be removed from the music industry.



Specialist Dealers

Specialist hi-fi retailers also come into this category because it's their interest that has driven them into their particular business. These specialist retailers also perform another very important function because, without them, hi-fi manufacturers would have to rely on the internet and hi-fi magazine reviewers to try and assess the relative merits of different brands for potential customers – a notoriously unreliable decision making process. Specialist hi-fi retailers are constantly being offered new products for assessment and potential stocking and, as it is also their hobby as well as their livelihood, they are greatly interested in achieving the best performance and seeking out the most outstanding combinations. More than that though is their relationship with audiophiles and hi-fi connoisseurs for, if they are to stay in business, they must satisfy the most discerning customers in the industry. The reality is that audiophiles and specialist hi-fi retailers (and the ones listed on this page represent the UK's finest) are essential to each other.

Specialist dealers know how to choose the products that combine as a superb system and how to get the best out of it by expert

installation in the home. They also appreciate how exciting and involving music can be and how it can deliver a powerful emotional experience. If there's a price premium over an internet purchase by choosing a specialist dealer, it's probably a small one, but it's unquestionably worth the difference.

Listed below is our selection of

THE BEST HI-FI DEALERS IN THE UK.

They have been chosen because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

Our Top 20 UK Hi-Fi Dealers

SOUTH

Ashford. Kent

SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI

40 High Street. t: 01233 624441 www.soundcrafthifi.com

Chelmsford

RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION

216 Moulsham Street. t: 01245 265245 www.rayleighhifi.com

Kingston-upon-Thames

INFIDELITY

9 High Street, Hampton Wick. t: 020 8943 3530 www.infidelity.co.uk

Maidenhead

AUDIO VENUE

36 Queen Street. t: 01628 633995 www.audiovenue.com

Norwich

MARTINS HI-FI

85-91 Ber Street. t: 01603 627134 www.martinshifi.co.uk

Ravleinh

RAYLEIGH HI-FI

44a High Street. t: 01268 779762 www.rayleighhifi.com

Southend-on-Sea

RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION

132/4 London Road. t: 01702 435255 www.rayleighhifi.com

LONDON

Ealing

AUDIO VENUE

27 Bond Street. t: 020 8567 8703 www.audiovenue.com

N1

GRAHAMS HI-FI

190a New North Road. t: 020 7226 5500 www.grahams.co.uk

SW11

ORANGES & LEMONS

61/63 Webbs Road. t: 020 7924 2043 www.oandlhifi.co.uk

SOUTH WEST

Rath

AUDIENCE

14 Broad Street. t: 01225 333310 www.audience.org.uk

Exeter

GULLIFORD HI-FI

97 Sidwell Street. t: 01392 491194 www.gullifordhifi.co.uk

MIDLANDS

Banbury

OVERTURE

3 Church Lane. t: 01295 272158 www.overture.co.uk

Coventry

FRANK HARVEY

163 Spon Street. t: 024 7652 5200 www.frankharvey.co.uk

Leicestei

CYMBIOSIS

6 Hotel Street. t: 0116 262 3754 www.cymbiosis.com

Nottingham

CASTLE SOUND & VISION

48/50 Maid Marian Way. t: 0115 9584404 www.castlesoundvision.com

NORTH

Cheadle

THE AUDIO WORKS

14 Stockport Road. t: 0161 428 7887 www.theaudioworks<u>.co.uk</u>

Chester

ACOUSTICA

17 Hoole Road. t: 01244 344227 www.acoustica.co.uk

Gateshead

LINTONE AUDIO

7-11 Park Lane. t: 0191 477 4167 www.lintone.co.uk

Hull

THE AUDIO ROOM

Savile Street, Hull t: 01482 891375 www.theaudioroom.co.uk

York

SOUND ORGANISATION

2 Gillygate. t: 01904 627108 www.soundorg.co.uk

WALES

Monmouth

CERITECH AUDIO

5 Monnow Bridge. t: 01600 716362 www.ceritech-audio.co.uk

These specialist dealers have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.



STAR QUALITIES

VERDICT	$\boldsymbol{\pi}$				X
	_			<u> </u>	_
FACILITIES	\star	\star	\star	\star	*
SERVICE	*	*	\star	*	7
	· . ·		· . ·	· . ·	· .
VALUE FOR MONEY	\star	\star	\star	\star	*
3					

RADIO & TV

THE 20 BEST CHRISTMAS **PROGRAMMES**

This issue we pick the classical music highlights of the festive season. Full listings return next month

For weekly broadcast highlights visit www.classical-music.com



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE ADVENT SERVICE

Every year the Choir of St John's College Cambridge sets the Christmas scene with its Advent Carol service. This year's will include the Cherry Tree Carol, Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day and Out of Your Sleep as well as music by Brahms, Panufnik, Warlock, JS Bach and a new carol by Gabriel Jackson. Radio 3: A Service of Carols for Advent; Sunday 1 December; 3pm

MARIINSKY OPENING Russia's iconic Mariinsky Theatre has just reopened and this month there's a chance to see the gala which officially opened its doors. Soprano Anna Netrebko, tenor Plácido

Domingo, bass René Pape and violinist Leonidas Kavakos are among the classical stars performing at the high-profile concert. Sky Arts 2 HD: Mariinsky Opening Gala; Sunday 1 December, 8pm

3BREAKFAST ADVENT

Count down to Christmas with Radio 3's Breakfast. Each day, presenters Clemency Burton-Hill and Petroc Trelawny will be opening a door to reveal festive music and readings. There'll also be a chance to hear the BBC Singers perform carols that have been specially recorded for the programme. Radio 3: Breakfast; weekdays from 6.30am; weekends from 7am

4 LA NATIVITE DU SEIGNEUR Messiaen's epic nine-movement work is one of the most important organ pieces of the 20th century. Each section of the work is inspired by an image or concept, from the birth of Christ from 'The Shepherds' to the blistering final 'God Among Us'. Martin Baker plays the organ of Westminster Cathedral. Radio 3: Radio 3 Live In Concert; Sunday 1 December; 8pm

5 CHRISTMAS ORATORIO Here's Bach's Christmas Oratorio as you've never heard it before: in a new version for choir and wind orchestra. Soloists soprano Berit Norbakken Solset, countertenor Rupert Enticknap, tenor Petter Wulfsberg Moen and bass-baritone Thomas Tatzl perform live with the BBC Singers and the Norwegian Wind Ensemble. Christopher Bucknall conducts. Radio 3: Radio 3 Live In Concert; Friday 6 December; 7.30pm

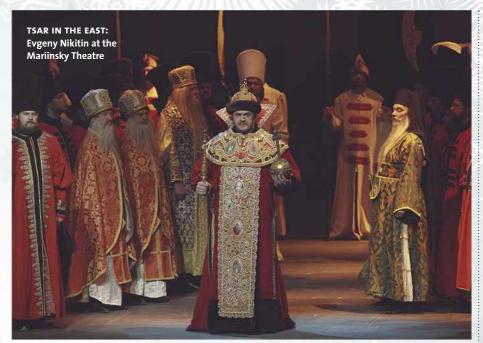
BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA You can always rely on the BBC Concert Orchestra for some joie de vivre – and its winter concert is no exception. Barry Wordsworth conducts excerpts from Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker and closes with Richard Rodney Bennett's Four American Carols. In between there are works by Lehár, Johann Strauss II and Rimsky-Korsakov. Radio 3: Radio 3 Live In Concert; Tuesday 10 December; 7.30pm

L'ENFANCE DU CHRIST When Berlioz first conducted a section of what became his oratorio L'enfance du Christ, he conned his audience into thinking it was by a fictional 17th-century composer called Pierre Ducré. His name is very much on the music for this performance, though, which is by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. François-Xavier Roth conducts. Radio 3: Radio 3 Live In Concert; Sunday 15 December; 2pm

8 MAGNIFICAT Radio 3 is broadcasting from the Temple Winter Festival this month, and this performance by the Tallis Scholars, who celebrate their 40th anniversary this year, is sure to be a highlight. Peter Phillips directs the choir in music by Lassus, Hassler, Schütz and Praetorius – with some Arvo Pärt thrown in. Radio 3: Radio 3 Live In Concert: Tuesday 17 December; 7.30pm

9IN TUNE CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

Celebrate the season of glad tidings with In Tune on 21 December. Broadcast live from the BBC's Radio Theatre, the programme will include Christmas carols and performances from some of the top names in choral



music. Throughout the month *In Tune* will also include 'Christmas Crackers' features exploring different aspects of festive music. Radio 3: In Tune Christmas Special; 21 December; time tbc; Christmas Crackers; from Tuesday 17 December; 5.30pm

10 MESSIAH
David Hill conducts Handel's wideranging oratorio Messiah in a performance
by the BBC Singers. Soprano Ruby Hughes
– a Radio 3 New Generation Artist – joins
countertenor David Allsopp, tenor Robin
Tritschler and bass Neal Davies for a piece
which spans the life of Christ from Isaiah's
prophecy of his birth to the resurrection.
Radio 3: Radio 3 Live In Concert;
Friday 20 December; 7.30pm

TRINITY CAROL ROLL
Catherine Bott presents an Early
Music Show looking at the Trinity Carol
Roll, one of the earliest sources for English
polyphonic carols. Among the 13 pieces
in the manuscript is the 'Agincourt' carol,
celebrating Henry V's famous victory. David
Skinner directs vocal ensemble Alamire.
Radio 3: Early Music Show;
Sunday 22 December; 2pm

12 SEAN RAFFERTY AT HOME WITH...

Presenter Sean Rafferty is one of the most recognisable voices on Radio 3. In this two-week series Rafferty interviews stars including pianist Dame Mitsuko Uchida, guitarist Julian Bream, conductors Sir Antonio Pappano and Sir Neville Marriner, baritone Sir Thomas Allen and flautist Sir James Galway. Radio 3: Sean Rafferty at home with...; from Monday 23 December; 4.30pm

13 RING CYCLE
One of the biggest events of this

One of the biggest events of this year's BBC Proms was the semi-staged performance of Wagner's *Ring* cycle with the Berlin Staatskapelle. Daniel Barenboim conducts a stellar cast including soprano Nina Stemme as Brünnhilde, bass-baritone Bryn Terfel as Wotan and tenor Lance Ryan as Siegfried. The four-part epic kicks off on Monday 23 December with *Das Rheingold* and comes to an apocalyptic end on Friday 27 December with *Götterdämmerung*. *Radio 3: Proms Ring cycle*; 23, 24, 26 & 27 December; 7pm

14 A FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

Stephen Cleobury directs the annual fixture which this year celebrates the music of Britten with performances of his A Boy was Born and A New Year Carol. Every year the service includes a new carol and this year's is Hear the voice of the Bard by Thea Musgrave. Other highlights include a performance of Judith Weir's Illuminare Jerusalem and Richard Rodney Bennett's Susanni.

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols; Radio 4, BBC World Service: 24 December; 3pm; Radio 3: 25 December; 2pm

15 CAROLS FROM KING'S
This tailored-for-television service
from King's College, Cambridge comprises
biblical readings, poems and, of course, some
of the best Christmas music ever written. The
2013 service will include Britten's Hymn to the
Virgin, a lively arrangement of Ding, Dong!
Merrily on High by Malcolm Williamson and
Bob Chilcott's The Shepherd's Carol.
BBC Two; Carols from King's;
Tuesday 24 December, time tbc

1 C FILM MUSIC

A quick thumb through Radio
Times shows just how many classic films are
shown at Christmas. And where would these
classics be without their scores? John Wilson
conducts this repeat of the Proms Hollywood
Rhapsody concert. From the 20th Century Fox
fanfare to Bernard Herrmann's *Psycho*, this is
a concert of lively musical stocking fillers.
Radio 3: Prom 59 – Hollywood Rhapsody;
Wednesday 25 December; 7pm

17 BUILDING A LIBRARY:

When, in 1797, Haydn was first presented with a libretto about the creation of the world, one of his collaborators, Baron van Swieten, said: 'I recognised at once that such an exalted subject would give Haydn the opportunity I had long desired, to express the full power of his inexhaustible genius.' In this *Building a Library*, Iain Burnside chooses the best of the work's many recordings.

Radio 3: CD Review – Building a Library; Saturday 28 December; 9am

18 LAST NIGHT OF THE 2013 PROMS

There's another chance to re-live the closing party of this year's BBC Proms at which Marin Alsop made history when she became the first woman to conduct the Last Night. Joining her on stage were mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, who sang music by Bernstein, Massenet, Rossini and Handel, and violinist Nigel Kennedy, who performed Vaughan Williams's The Lark Ascending. Radio 3: Last Night of the Proms (rpt); Tuesday 31 December; 9pm

19 SATURDAY CLASSICS FOR WINTER

Richard Sisson completes his exploration of the seasons with a programme on music inspired by the coldest season. There will be the Frost Scene from Purcell's King Arthur, an excerpt from Peter Maxwell Davies's Symphony No. 8 and Emile Waldteufel's Skater's Waltz... performed by a yodeller. Radio 3: Saturday Classics; Saturday 28 December; 2pm

20 NEW YEAR'S DAY CONCERT IN VIENNA

Daniel Barenboim conducts the New Year's Day concert from Vienna's glittering Musikverein. This will be the second time Barenboim has conducted the Strauss-family celebration, having first taken the podium in 2009. The programme is yet to be announced, but if the waltz 'By the Beautiful Blue Danube' doesn't feature, we'll eat our dancing shoes. New Year's Day Concert; Radio 3: Wednesday 1 January, 10.15am; BBC One, BBC Four, time tbc

LIVE CHOICE

20 UNMISSABLE EVENTS FOR CHRISTMAS 2013

The BBC Music Magazine guide to the very best concerts and opera – including highlights from the UK's amateur scene

For detailed concert listings visit www.classical-music.com/whats-on

1 JOHN ADAMS'S EL NIÑO Southbank Centre, London, 14 December

Tel: 0844 875 0073 (UK only) Web: www.southbankcentre.co.uk The Southbank's The Rest is Noise festival completes its 20th-century journey on an exuberant seasonal high with John Adams's 'Nativity Oratorio' El Niño. It's an eclectic opera-oratorio that was premiered on the cusp of the new millennium, and it draws on sources from Handel's Messiah and the Wakefield Mystery Plays to Hildegard of Bingen and Luther. The London Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus under Vladimir Jurowski offer season's greeting with a Hispanic twist.

YORK EARLY MUSIC CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

York, 6-15 December Tel: +44 (0)1904 658338 Web: www.ncem.co.uk/xmas Whether it's in the majestic Minster or the more modern comforts of the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, York gets into the festive spirit with a Festival that opens with a Venetian flourish. This year, it heads to the Monastery of Santa Cruz with period ensemble L'Avventura to unwrap 16th- and 17th-century Portuguese villancicos (songs), remembers the Poulenc and Britten anniversaries, and pulls a Corelli cracker with violinist Rachel Podger and members of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. (See Destinations, p46).

3 ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow, 5 December Tel: +44 (0)141 353 8000 Web: www.glasgowconcerthalls.com

What's not to like? There's dancing coffee from Arabia and tea from China, not

5 HUMPERDINCK'S HANSEL AND GRETEL

Theatre Royal, Plymouth, 3 December Tel: +44 (0)1752 267222 Web: www.theatreroyal.com Director Laurent Pelly's 2008 operain-a-box production of Humperdinck's fairy tale favourite wags a tunefully cautionary finger at the perils of overindulgence. Ilyich Rivas conducts the Glyndebourne on Tour revival, with tenor Colin Judson as the witch and mezzo Victoria Yarovaya and soprano Andriana Churchman as the babes in the wood.

DOWN IN THE WOODS: Glyndebourne on Tour's Hansel and Gretal



CHRISTMAS WITH THE SIXTEEN: Harry Christophers leads a festive programme (Choice No. 6)

forgetting the Russian candy canes and the Sugar Plum Fairy herself – Act II of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* leaves a sweet taste after the similarly balletic 'Winter' from Glazunov's The Seasons. Conductor Alexander Shelley keeps the Royal Scottish National Orchestra on its toes.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL St John's Smith Square, London, 13-23 December

Tel: +44 (0)20 7222 1061 Web: www.sjss.org.uk

For over a quarter of a century, Westminster has sayoured an aural advent calendar at the church-turned-concert-hall that is St John's Smith Square. Under Stephen Layton's direction, the Christmas Festival goes from strength to strength, and for 2013 includes a recreation of a Leipzig Christmas Vespers. Meanwhile, the Tallis Scholars 'hail' Mary, The Cardinall's Musick revisits its annual theme of Angels, and Layton himself conducts Handel's Messiah and JS Bach's Christmas Oratorio.



THE SIXTEEN

St David's Hall, Cardiff, 13 December Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 8444

Web: www.stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk The Sixteen's Christmas tour might end up in the Italian city of Perugia, but from Edinburgh to London, by way of Oxford, York, Reading, Taunton and, here, Cardiff, there's plenty of opportunity to catch Harry Christophers' tantalising programme which wraps a selection of early carols around Christmas music by Poulenc and Britten.

BERLIOZ'S L'ENFANCE **DU CHRIST**

Barbican, London, 15 December Tel: +44 (0)20 7638 8891 Web: www.barbican.org.uk Berlioz doesn't deal with the Nativity and the events leading up to it. Instead, his 'sacred trilogy' picks up the story with Herod's dream and the flight into Egypt (which follows the oratorio's delectable chorus: 'The Shepherd's Farewell'). François-Xavier Roth conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in a

performance with tenor Yann Beuron as the narrator, mezzo Karen Cargill and baritone Marcus Farnworth as Mary and Joseph, and bass-baritone Christopher Purves as Herod.

8 AN ELIZABETHAN CHRISTMAS

Town Hall, Birmingham, 8 December

Tel: +44 (0)121 345 0600 Web: www.thsh.co.uk

Christmas is a busy time for the Ex Cathedra choir, with candlelit concerts in London and the Midlands as well as the annual marathon at St Paul's in Birmingham. But, in the company of Fretwork, it still takes time out to visit the Court of Elizabeth I for Byrd's Mass for Four Voices and The Great Service, plus Christmas motets by Gibbons and Tallis.

9 OPERA NORTH Town Hall, Leeds, 13 December Tel: +44 (0)113 224 3801

Web: www.operanorth.co.uk For the past season, Opera North has been putting its shoulder to the Britten anniversary

BACKSTAGE WITH...

Elizabeth Kenny

GOING HUNTING: Elizabeth Kenny performs Actéon

You're combining festive with distinctly unfestive works in Theatre of the Ayre's concert on 11 December. How did you decide the programme? I've been wanting to perform Charpentier's Actéon for quite a while and we decided we'd do it around Christmas time. We've added Christmas works which we thought would complement both the deadly serious and more light-hearted elements of it. We'll be performing Actéon in the second half, as once you've gone there, it's very hard to go back and do something jolly!

Briefly describe the plot of Actéon for those who might not know it...

It's a reworking of the myth of Actaeon from Ovid's Metamorphoses. He's a callow young hunter who makes the mistake of coming across the goddess Diana while she's taking a bath. She is incensed and turns him into a stag, at which points his dogs turn on him and tear him apart. When we discussed doing it at Christmas, I sort of thought of it as Rudolf the red-nosed reindeer coming to a sticky end!

Is it a sizeable work?

It is about an hour long. It's a genre called 'pastorale', of which Charpentier wrote quite a few – they have all the elements of his larger operas condensed into an hour or so of rather intense action.

Ovid's telling of this tale is brilliantly colourful. Does Charpentier match it? Absolutely! There's a lot of very descriptive music. There's the laziness and sensuality of the hanging around before they go hunting, at which point the dogs go completely mad. And then we also flip towards some very serious choral writing. Charpentier throws you from one musical world to another in a way that I think is a sonic equivalent of those very startling and immediate images that you get in Metamorphoses.

See Choice No. 13

wheel with single-minded gusto. Appropriate, then, that ahead of a festive selection box including A Ceremony of Carols in Dewsbury on 18 December, the choir and orchestra lend their heft to a community performance of Britten's cantata St Nicolas. Conductor Timothy Burke presides over the saint's 'Piety and Marvellous Works'.

BACH'S CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

Kings Place, London, 19 December Tel: 0844 254 0321 (UK only) Web: www.kingsplace.co.uk From the joyful exuberance of its Christmas Day opening chorus to the brass-embellished final chorale of the closing cantata intended for the Feast of Epiphany, the Christmas Oratorio makes for topical listening as Kings Place's 'Bach Unwrapped' year nears its close. Here, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment joins the Platinum Consort under conductor Scott Inglis-Kidger for Parts I, III, V and VI.

ULSTER ORCHESTRA Ulster Hall, Belfast, 18 December Tel: +44 (0)28 9033 4400

Web: www.ulsterorchestra.com Two performances of Handel's Messiah under Kenneth Montgomery and an accompanied screening of *The Snowman* are on the Ulster Orchestra's Christmas 'to-do' list; but in a lunchtime tangent, (and sung by soprano Mary Nelson), Timothy Henty conducts Finzi's exquisitely crafted meditation on the miracle of new life: Dies natalis.

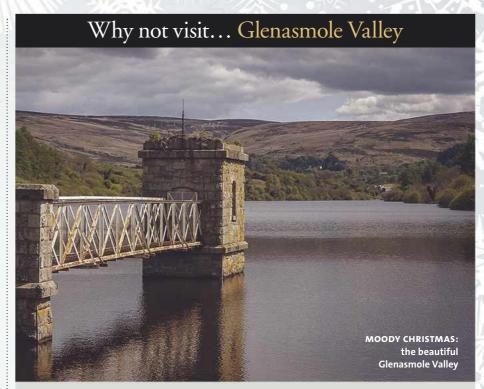
THE KING'S CONSORT Wigmore Hall, London, 23 December

Tel: +44 (0)20 7935 2141 Web: www.wigmore-hall.org.uk St John's Smith Square (see Choice 4) isn't the only London venue with a Leipzig Christmas in its sights. Over at Wigmore Hall, Robert King lines up a head-turning roster of singers to explore Advent and Christmas music by two of the city's most illustrious Thomaskantors: Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722) and his successor JS Bach, whose great Advent cantata Wachet auf rounds

THEATRE OF THE AYRE Turner Sims, Southampton, 11 December

off the festivities.

Tel: +44 (0)23 8059 5151 Web: www.turnersims.co.uk Theatre of the Ayre, lutenist Elizabeth Kenny's early music ensemble with a soft spot for the 17th century, doesn't like to straitjacket itself. 2013 saw the start of 'Lutes & Ukes', a collaboration with the National Ukulele a collaboration with the National Окијеј Orchestra of Great Britain. The ukuleles,



Where Bax envisaged Christmas Eve... in the middle of summer



he chances of Arnold Bax (left) being out of the pub on Christmas Eve were, frankly, pretty remote. So it's not surprising to learn that the hill walk that inspired his 1913 orchestral work Christmas Eve on the Mountains was taken not on a chilly evening in December but during a previous summer... and the rest relied on his imagination. 'The motif of the tone poem occurred to me whilst wandering one evening last summer in the beautiful and legended Glean na Smól (Glenasmole) in County Dublin', wrote the English composer, describing the opening as depicting the 'sharp light of the frosty stars and ecstasy of peace falling for one night of the year upon the troubled Irish hills.' Closely associated with the legends of the

warrior Finn McCool, Glenasmole Valley is today, rather more prosaically, home to a couple of reservoirs, though remains a fine place for walking and birdwatching.

- Where is it? Glenasmole Valley is around 7 miles southwest of Dublin
- **How to view it** For walkers, a trail is provided by the Dublin Mountains Way

however, will not be in evidence for an evening of Charpentier that places noëls and Christmas motets around his Ovidinspired opera-in-miniature, Actéon (see interview p99)

THE CANDLES GLOW St Bartholomew the Great. London, 2 December

Tel: +44 (0)20 7553 4000

Web: www.editionpeters.com/concert Christmas might be a time for hallowed old favourites, but old favourites were new once. Conductor Stephen Cleobury, Voces8, and Lumina under Rupert Gough present a candlelit celebration of contemporary Christmas choral music bursting with world premieres. Alongside Judith Bingham's

Annunciation IV are two new works by Roxanna Panufnik, and a new setting of St Augustine by Alexander Levine.

THE CITY MUSICK Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, 7 December

Tel: +44 (0)114 249 6000

Web: www.musicintheround.co.uk Armed with curtails, cornettos, serpents and ophicleides, The City Musick evokes the sounds of Christmas past, reliving the music-making of the 17th to 19th centuries as depicted in the works of Thomas Hardy. Lending a hand - or, rather, their voices will be guest carollers from The Festival of Village Carols to provide a local twist on a living tradition.



BRITTEN'S CEREMONY 6 OF CAROLS

Westminster Cathedral, London, 10 December

Tel: +44 (0)20 7931 6025

Web: westminstercathedral.org.uk The choristers of Westminster Cathedral have good reason to be grateful to Britten. In marking the retirement of conductor George Malcolm in 1959 with the composition of his Missa Brevis for triple treble choir, he gave their predecessors a miniature masterpiece. In this 100th birthday year, they return the compliment with a performance of A Ceremony of Carols conducted by Martin Baker.

HANDEL'S MESSIAH Lighthouse, Poole, 18 December

Tel: 0844 406 8666 (UK only) Web: www.bsolive.com

Symphony orchestras tend to give Handel a wide berth since the rise of the period instrument movement, but it is rare to find an orchestra that doesn't have a Messiah or two up its sleeve at Christmas. The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra might not be swapping instruments, but it's enlisted the specialist expertise of conductor Christian Curnyn to direct performances with soloists including soprano Rebecca Bottone and bass-baritone Christopher Purves.

O NEW YEAR IN VIENNA O Usher Hall, Edinburgh, 1 January

Tel: +44 (0)131 228 1155 Web: www.sco.org.uk

Conductor Nicholas McGegan masterminds the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's take on the traditional New Year celebration in Vienna's gilded Musikverein. A salvo of Strauss is de riqueur of course, while tenor John Mark Ainsley delves into songs popularised by his Austrian forebear, the great tenor Richard Tauber (1891-1948).

9 BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA

G Live, Guildford, 11 December Tel: 0844 7701 797 (UK only)

Web: www.glive.co.uk

Strauss and Lehár meet Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov in Barry Wordsworth's programme that wraps Christmas and New Year into one. But tucked under a tree glistening with popular favourites, the BBC Concert Orchestra's conductor laureate pops a couple of rarities, including Bax's symphonic poem Christmas Eve on the Mountains (see 'Why not visit...') and showcasing the New London Chamber Choir, a late work by Richard Rodney Bennett: the Four American Carols.

GABRIEL'S GREETYNGE St Mary's Church, Warwick, 10 December

Tel: +44 (0)1926 776438

Web: www.ioglaresa.com

Embellished with fidel and harp, bells and bagpipes, 'Gabriel's Greetynge' rings loud and clear in Joglaresa's latest yuletide foray placing anonymous Middle English songs alongside folksy arrangements of numbers from the late medieval Piae Cantiones. For a little southern comfort, there's also something from 13th-century Spain and 14th-century Florence, as well as a dig at King Herod.

OVER TO YOU!

The non-professional concerts to catch this month



Yorkshire Bach Choir

St Michael le Belfrey Church, York, 6 December

The Yorkshire Bach Choir may be in the North of England, but musically this concert has its sights on 17th-century Venice. The choir is joined by the Yorkshire Baroque Soloists and the English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble for a programme of Monteverdi, Schütz and Praetorius.

Joyful Company of Singers Newgate, Holborn, 4 December

There are plenty of chances to join in at the aptly named Joyful Company of Singers' Christmas concert. A selection of carols kicks things off before the choir strides into less familiar territory with the premiere of Csemiczky's Two Sacred Songs.

St John of Jerusalem **Festival Chorus**

St John of Jerusalem Church, Hackney, 8 December

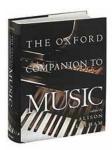
Hackney's community choir takes on Bach's great Christmas Oratorio - John Andrews (above) conducts movements from the work. Tenor WeiHsi Hu sings the role of the Evangelist alongside soprano Emma Dogliani, countertenor David Sheppard and baritone Grant Doyle.

Finchley Chamber Orchestra Church of St John the Evangelist, 14 December

The North London chamber ensemble's concert includes excerpts from Bach's Christmas Oratorio, Handel's Zadok the Priest, Gounod's O Divine Redeemer, music from Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty and a selection of carols. David Lardi conducts. Send us your concert details to overtoyou@classical-music.com

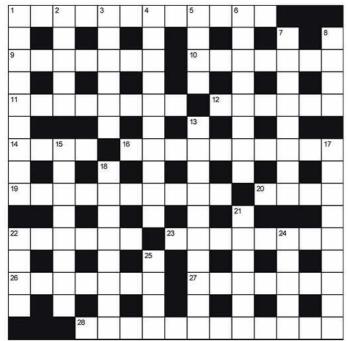


For details of events in your area, visit our online concert diary at www.classical-music.com/whats-on



Christmas prize crossword No. 263

The first correct solution of our monthly crossword to be picked at random will win a copy of The Oxford Companion to Music worth £40 (available at bookstores or www.oup.co.uk). Send your answers to: BBC Music Magazine, Crossword 263, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 23 December (solution in our March issue). Crossword set by Paul Henderson



Your na	me & addı	ess	 	
•••••			 	

- 1 Family succeeded in cloq dancing with glee in Cambridge location (5,7)
- 9 Performer, mature, commissioned for
- 10 Change of direction in version of neat Ravel piece (7)
- 11 No sitar's repaired? That's a flaming nuisance, to say the least (8)
- 12 Barrel organ finally encompassing end of piece commissioned for 1,28 (6)
- 14 Friend's friendly though misplacing piano (4) 16 I may be enthralled by broadcast channel,
- following graduate choreographer (10) 19 Objective reinterpretation of piano realms
- one American discounted (10) 20 Strange to be cut, commissioned for 1,28 (4) 22 Tone poem - very hot stuff - little time to
- participate (6) 23 Shadowy area devoid of feeling in dramatic music, nothing less (8)
- 26 Name I pass: excellent German composer (7) 27 German bandleader receiving a doctor's rebuke (7)
- 28 Elaborated vicar's role in church's seasonal event (5,7)

DOWN

- 1 Hindu goddess supporting girl over a dance drama in India (9)
- 2 Wagner roles, note, RSNO adapted (5)
- 3 Ardent fellow, by the sound of it, commissioned for 1,28 (6)
- 4 Start first of performances when no-one feels restraint (4,6)
- 5 String instrument left us totally excited, initially (4)
- 6 What conductor provides, not entirely suitable for Scottish Ballet? (8)
- Make no advance like the metronome? (4.4)
- 8 Study includes one commissioned for 1.28 (4)

- 13 Ballet's age represented in light pieces of music (10)
- 15 Adornment for embouchure and cheek getting criticism (8)
- 17 Hear tune broadcast when taking in unknown opera (9)
- 18 Transpose old dance, shifting line for singing actor (8)
- 21 Silent performer? Mother's merely taking first half only (6)
- 22 Rival penning note commissioned for 1,28 (4)
- 24 Praise for performers beginning to bewilder
- 25 Operatic heroine achieved nothing (4)



OCTOBER WINNER S Brown, Northampton

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THE IMUSIC CHRISTMAS QUIZ ANSWERS from p34

- 1 Britten's A Ceremony of Carols
- 2 The Skaters' Waltz
- 3 Janáček's Jenůfa
- 4 Jean Sibelius
- 5 Vaughan Williams's Sinfonia Antartica in the score, each movement is preceded by a literary quote, though they are rarely read out in concert 6 Both words would be sung five times - 'Snow' appears five times in the first verse of In the Bleak Midwinter, while 'Sun' appears once in each of the five refrains of The Holly and the lvy
- 7 The Snow Maiden
- 8 Erich Korngold
- 9 They all feature the voice of Peter Auty, either as a treble (Snowman, train) or as a tenor (Gothic Symphony)
- 10 Mieczysław Karłowicz
- 11 Herbert Howells
- 12 'Tea for Two' 13 Franz Liszt



28 William Byrd









- 14 Carlos Gardel
- 15 A sequence of their music accompanied Dujardin's Olympic Individual Dressage gold medal-winning routine
- 16 John Rutter
- 17 Darius Milhaud
- 18 Richard Strauss his family had the work completed and published posthumously
- 19 Granville Bantock
- 20 Erik Satie
- 21 Balthazar
- 22 Aaron Copland
- 23 His grand piano
- 24 Cilea's Adriana Lecouvreur
- 25 Eight maids a-milking
- 32 Tamino in Mozart's Magic Flute
- 33 Children's Corner
- 34 Joseph Haydn
- 35 Nadia Boulanger
- 36 Grieg's Piano Concerto

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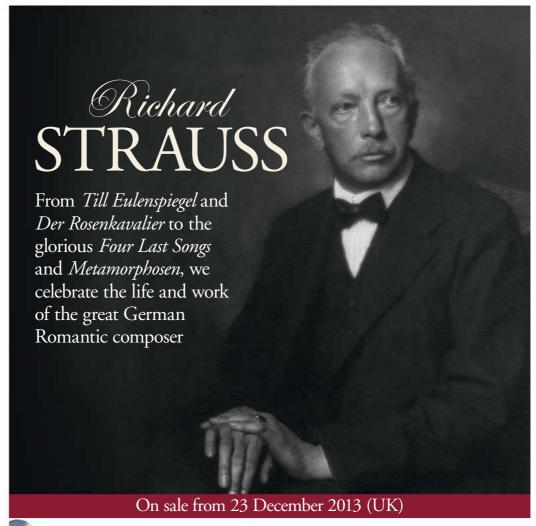
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Willi Boskovsky

Tully Potter on the brilliant violinist and conductor who was to the Viennese New Year as Malcolm Sargent was to the BBC Proms

Poor composers

We're all a bit skint after Christmas, but some composers made a habit of it, says Rebecca Franks

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MUSIC THAT CHANGED ME

Edward Fox actor

ne very clear early memory for me is the pianist Artur Schnabel. I was given his recording of three BEETHOVEN Sonatas by my godfather's wife. I must have been about six or seven. And I remember feeling that my life had instantly changed hearing Schnabel play the last movement of the 'Moonlight'. I believe that now. I thought then, 'this is where my great passion will be'; you don't say that to yourself when you're six or seven but that's what I felt, I remember.

I love Schnabel because his motto was 'safety last' and that's what you feel with his playing: he's daring his own limits and seeking for Beethoven's too. And that came over to me, even back then, and I of course took to playing the first movement, which is very approachable for even a beginner.

My delight, too, was to keep a scrapbook, and it was full of musicians – anything I found in a paper, actually. My brother's godfather got me Yehudi Menuhin's autograph from a Prom. And I remember going to the record shop for 78s in my local town and always buying Handel, Mozart, Dvořák as well as anything conducted by THOMAS BEECHAM.

Later in my teens I went up to London to a terrific shop called The Gramophone Exchange. There was a dear man there who ran the shop, and I'd go in and ask him, 'what's interesting now?' and he'd say 'Well I've got this, you know...'. And he'd bring out something very interesting, including a super recording of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf singing HUGO WOLF songs with Wilhelm Furtwängler at the piano. It's such a wonderful recording – there's almost a marriage between them of understanding, a depth in the music. It's not just beauty and prettiness.

The best teacher I've ever come across was a lady called Miss Tisehurst. She was a reasonably accomplished musician herself, but she was a wonderful teacher because she wasn't interested in herself; she was interested in you, and music. So I remember her vividly. And if I'd gone on to have a Miss Tisehurst all my life, I'd have been a little bit better than I am now! She would introduce me to beautiful music: easy Schumann, easy Beethoven...

SCHNABEL FAN:
'my life changed hearing him play'

IN 1973, A THEN unknown Edward Fox launched his film career playing an assassin in *The Day of the Jackal*. Since then, Fox has appeared in such classics as *A Bridge Too Far, Force 10 from Navarone* and the TV drama *Edward and Mrs Simpson* in which he portrayed Edward VIII. On 8 December, Fox is performing a movement from Schumann's *Kinderszenen* at Kings Place alongside fellow celebrity actors, politicians and journalists; and on 25 May 2014, he joins cellist Tim Hugh in a concert of Bach Suites and poetry, also at Kings Place.

One of most enduring memories of watching live performance was seeing Vladimir Horowitz when he played the RACHMANINOV Second Sonata in the Festival Hall in an afternoon concert that I watched on television. He thundered at it like a brave old warrior as if it was the first time he'd ever tried to play it; I thought it was magnificent. He was able to touch Russian lyricism impeccably: no one can play the start of Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto like Horowitz. He could do anything, of course.

In terms of pianists today, however, there are many good ones – András Schiff is very

fine, Daniel Barenboim, too, of course...
But the American pianist RICHARD
GOODE, however, is one step further
for me. That sounds an awful,
condemnatory thing to say, because
the talent of so many pianists today
is prodigious, even colossal. But with
Richard, it's his enormous experience,
lifelong years of total dedication and
a total absorption with the music that
matters to him. His playing somehow
gets sent down into a deeper depth so
that it becomes not just music anymore
but poetry as well – and something
almost blessed, certainly mysterious.

All this can only arrive through absolute obsession and engagement with the art, which that artist knows is going to be all too briefly ended – because life will end. ■

Interview by Oliver Condy

EDWARD FOX

MUSIC CHOICE



Beethoven Piano Sonatas Nos 14, 15 & 16 Artur Schnabel (piano) Naxos 8.110759 #6.99



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